DON PERCY

A Man sent from God
to the Land of the Inquisition

By

WINIFRED M. PEARCE

With Foreword by

REV. GEOFFREY R. KING

DON PERCY

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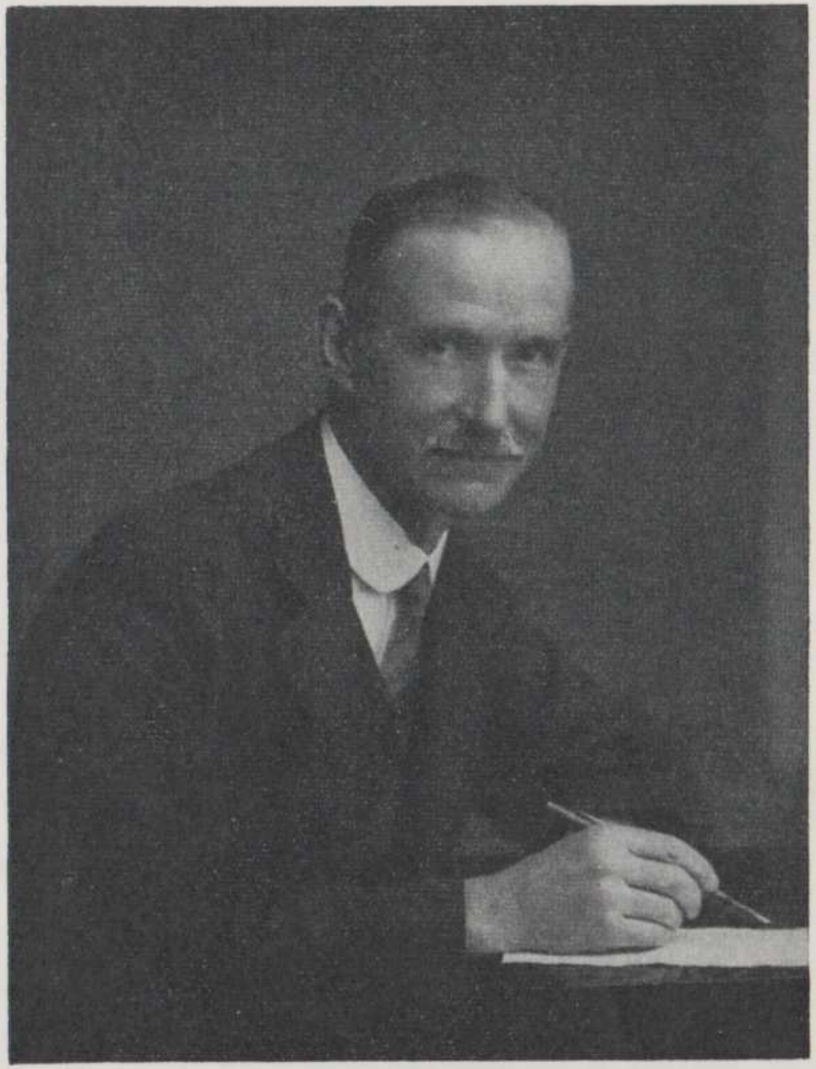

PERCY J. BUFFARD
in his prime

DON PERCY

A Man sent from God to
the Land of the Inquisition

The Life Story of Percy J. Buffard
Founder of the Spanish Gospel Mission

by

WINIFRED M. PEARCE

Published by
THE SPANISH GOSPEL MISSION
56, DORSET ROAD
BEXHILL-ON-SEA
SUSSEX

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
STANLEY L. HUNT (PRINTERS) LTD., GEORGE STREET, RUSHDEN, NORTHANTS

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FOREWORD

THIS is a very great story indeed. The writer plunges us at once into a sample of mob fury and the cool bravery and quiet wisdom of the hero of this biography. From then on there is not a dull page. Indeed, it is one of those volumes which the reader is loath to put down till finished.

" Evangelizing Spain ! " That was the vision entrusted by the Saviour to this young man; and never did he turn from it. Plots to kill him daunted him not a bit. Utterly fearless before authorities, but always wise, this lone missionary started in a hostile land with no Society behind him. Persecution he knew all about, but usually it only aided the evangelism and increased attendances, until his " parish " became larger than England and Wales together, with three million people. Continually battling against his own ill health, he opened up medical work eventually to enhance the Gospel. He and his wife knew what it was for years " to live from hand to mouth, albeit from the Lord's hand ", in evidence of which money would come in sometimes at the moment of need in miracle fashion. But the privations they endured ! One mark of his greatness was to inspire love and loyalty in his workers and in his flock. The story of his last visit to the Field, after the Civil War and the World War, will leave few eyes dry.

You really must read this book. And be sure to take Spain upon your heart, if not there already.

I knew him well and esteemed him dearly. I met him first in Switzerland when we were fellow speakers at the last two of those vast international youth conventions at Thun before the War, run by Frau Dr. Gertrud Wasserzüg. At the *second* he gave the English-speaking Bible Readings on Colossians, his favourite Epistle; and my wife and I stayed with him afterwards at Beatenburg. At the *first* his boy, Frank, was in the party—a bright-eyed lad, who some years later joined my church in East London, married

one of our young ladies, and was ordained there and valedicted—the Rev. Frank Buffard, B.D. And I was in College with the Rev. E. Stuart Brown. These valued links, as well as serving for a few years on the Board of the Spanish Gospel Mission, make the writing of this little Foreword a delightful privilege.

Colossians ! I have been reading the opening chapters again with Don Percy and his dear Spaniards in mind. No wonder he so loved this part of the Word. It might have been written for him. And the closing verses of the first chapter I seem to hear him saying as his testimony through the pages of this volume, and which I would make my tribute to his memory:

> CHRIST in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in CHRIST JESUS: whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.

GEOFFREY R. KING.

CHAPTER 1

THERE WAS A RIOT

THE situation looked ugly. Indeed, it bore such close resemblance to the nineteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that those who were at the centre of the angry scene might have imagined themselves to be living in the first century A.D. instead of the early years of the twentieth.

It has been said that wherever the Apostle Paul went there was either a riot or a revival. The presentation of the Gospel is ever a challenge to receive or reject it, and reaction governs behaviour.

In Elgoibar that morning there was a riot. Threats and execrations rent the air, and, surrounded by a fanatical mob who with murder in their hearts were armed with sticks and stones, stood two defenceless figures: a young Englishman and a Spanish colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

The fury of the Roman Catholic population of this Basque village had been provoked by the discovery that the two men who had arrived in their midst were selling and distributing Gospels and Protestant literature. It was well for their safety that the police were soon on the scene. They marched them off to the Town Hall, where they were examined by the Mayor, who demanded the payment of a fine.

The Englishman, knowing that their papers were in order and that the Government then allowed colportage work, upheld their rights, refused to pay the fine, and dared the Mayor to imprison them. Abashed by such boldness, and unable to refute his claims, the Mayor dismissed them with a caution.

Rights are established in the exercise of them, so a few days later the two men again appeared in Elgoibar. They were immediately recognized, and another riot ensued. The police again intervened and were about to arrest the foreigner when he asked, " Am I a prisoner ? "

They answered, " No, but you must not sell those books."

" If I am not a prisoner I am free to do what the law allows," replied the Englishman, and wrenching himself free from the clutch of the policeman who grasped his shoulder, he again offered the Gospels to the crowd.

For this cool contempt for authority unlawfully exercised, the two men were again conducted to the Town Hall, where they were interviewed by the Secretary as the Mayor was reported to be ill.

Confident as to the legality of his procedure, the Englishman repeated the question he had put to the police.

" Yes," was the response, " you can consider yourself a prisoner."

That was precisely the answer the young man was seeking to provoke. Turning to the colporteur, who on his instructions had not offered anything for sale that morning, and was therefore not included under the charge, he told him to telegraph at once to the Governor of the Province and the British Consul, and inform them that a British subject was in prison for selling Bibles.

Alarmed at the unexpected course matters were taking, the Secretary called the colporteur back and quickly extricated himself from his dilemma with the foolish remark, " I was only speaking in hypothesis," and in a further face-saving effort forbade the selling of Bibles or Scripture portions in the village. The Englishman asked for a written prohibition, which the official refused, and then granted.

The two men then went to San Sebastian armed with this precious document, which they presented to the Governor. He received his visitors in the friendliest manner, and sent strict orders to the Mayor of Elgoibar to refrain from interfering with their activities, against which there was no law.

Who was this dark-haired young Englishman, with bright, penetrating eyes, who for the sake of the Gospel and perishing souls could face fanatical mobs with composure, and with wit and daring expose the illegality of authority exceeding its province ? This was " a man sent from God " to the land of the Inquisition, whose name was Percy John Buffard.

CHAPTER 2

FROM HORTICULTURE TO TEACHING

HOW often has the preparation of those destined to become honoured servants of the Lord been received in scenes seemingly unrelated in any way to the sphere to which they were eventually called. John Paton sat beside his father, superintending a stocking machine. Mary Slessor worked in a Lancashire mill. William Carey was a cobbler in a remote Northamptonshire village.

Of Percy John Buffard, in circumstances that differed from these in many particulars, the same was also true. At the age of ten he moved with his godly parents from Chiswick to the pleasant village of Ditchling, nestling at the foot of the Sussex Downs, where his father established a horticultural business, and where the boy found a new and fascinating environment, with hills to climb from the summits of which on a clear day he could survey the country for miles around, and fill his lungs with the sweet, unadulterated air.

The spiritually formative influence of his young days was his home, where his parents, by example and precept, taught him the Gospel, and it is not surprising that in later years he confessed that he could not remember a time when he had not loved the Lord and desired to serve Him. In his experience there was no sudden conversion, but there were occasions when in a marked way God confirmed his faith and dedication. From his earliest years he felt a vague desire to be a missionary, and missionary speakers who addressed his Sunday school had at least one young listener who hung upon their words. Of all Bible characters, his hero was Paul, whom he admired not only for his exploits and patient endurance of suffering, but also because he was a self-supporting missionary. That, he felt, was most praiseworthy.

When school days were over Percy had no clear call from the Lord, and choosing horticulture as his career, he worked for a time with his father. Then, wishing to gain wider experience, he spent three years at two other nurseries, intending thereafter to rejoin his father. But the Lord had other plans, and into His purpose for his life the young man began, all unwittingly, to be directed.

The effects of a spinal injury had become more marked during his absence from home, and in view of the physical exertion involved in horticultural work he recognized the necessity to seek some occupation other than that for which he had been trained. Clerical work was the obvious answer, especially as he had already revealed considerable aptitude for business, so he prepared himself for a new career by studying accountancy.

Meanwhile, Percy found plenty of scope for Christian service. Encouraged and guided by his father, who did much local preaching in the district, he too began to preach, his opportunities to serve the Lord increasing greatly when his father, deeply concerned about the lack of evangelical witness in Ditchling, was enabled, with the help of one or two friends, to erect an undenominational place of worship in the centre of the village. Percy's special sphere was among youth, and his gift for personal witness was used to lead many young men of his own age to a saving knowledge of Christ.

In due course he applied for, and, as he believed, obtained a position in an office where he was to commence work on a certain date in October 1907. Nothing could be more natural than that he should decide to take a brief holiday before settling down in his new job, and he went to London to spend a few days with some friends.

One morning while there he picked up a newspaper, and was glancing rather casually through its pages when his attention was arrested by the advertisement of a certain scholastic agency inviting applications for the post of English teacher in a language school in Spain. Percy Buffard was not seeking a post. In a few days' time he would have started in the office to which he had been appointed, so why should this advertisement interest him? He thought no more about it and went out for a walk.

Later, while passing along a street in the City, he found himself outside the premises of the agency whose advertisement he had read that morning. This was a very curious coincidence, but what significance could it have for him? He was about to walk on when the thought occurred to him that such a post might provide a way of doing missionary work, while supporting himself by teaching. But why should he consider such an idea? He was not free to accept the post if it were offered to him.

But something kept him standing there. To quote his own words, "An inner Voice said to me, 'Go and see'. So I went."

At the end of an interview he was on the horns of a dilemma. Having accepted one post, he was now being offered another. Certainly the circumstances which had caused the vacancy were not encouraging. Three teachers had been sent out in quick succession. The first had died *en route*, the second had never reached his destination, and nothing had since been heard of him, the third had landed in prison, as Percy later learned, for quarrelling with the police when his passions were inflamed with strong drink.

Although to decline the offer seemed to be the only course open to him, the mysterious constraint that had compelled him to enter the building was still upon him, and he evaded the issue by saying that he could not decide until he had consulted his parents. On his return to Ditchling he found, awaiting his arrival, a letter from his prospective employer, telling him that certain circumstances had compelled him to withdraw his offer.

This strange episode was epochal in Percy Buffard's experience. He was then twenty-four, in the prime of his young manhood. Sensitive and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, he had been directed to the land that was to feel the impact of his missionary fervour for the rest of his life. And there was no waiting period. The need at the language school in Santander was urgent, so, with the consent of his parents, in less than a week he was on his way.

After two days of travelling he reached San Sebastian, just over the Spanish border, where his only hope of making himself understood lay between the covers of a Spanish

Mr. Buffard when he first went to Spain

phrase book. Having consulted it, he asked at the booking office for a ticket to Santander. Unable to interpret the clerk's reply, he showed him the phrase in Spanish and wrote the name " Santander ". A spate of unintelligible words was shouted at him, which only increased his confusion, until, in despair, he appealed to bystanders for help, asking if there was anyone who spoke English or French. Someone who understood French came forward, took charge of the situation, and gained for him the information that to obtain a ticket for Santander he must cross the city to another station, adding the further kindness of directing him thither.

The first journey in Spain he never forgot. The train was crowded, his compartment being packed with peasant folk, sacks of garden produce, chickens and goats.

Before he left home the Vicar of the parish had called upon his parents, urging then to forbid his going to Spain. " They are all cut-throats there," he asserted dogmatically. " I am sure he will not come back alive."

Remembering this gloomy prophecy, Percy anxiously surveyed his fellow passengers, but no knives or daggers were visible. However, his worst fears were aroused when, with the train travelling at the " express " speed of twenty miles an hour, the door of the compartment burst open, and a fierce-looking bearded man leapt in. The sudden advent of this apparently desperate character could surely mean nothing less than a " hold-up ", but what was Percy's relief to find that he was on the legitimate business of punching tickets ! This done, he opened the door again and disappeared, walking along the foot-board to the next compartment, and so on down the length of the train.

After a journey that lacked nothing in the way of discomfort, he arrived at Santander, and was recommended to a large boarding house, where he was to remain in residence for the next two years.

In a little back street of this town of 85,000 inhabitants he discovered the one Protestant church, which was founded and supported by the American Congregational Board. The Pastor, Don Francisco Acosta, who was also headmaster of the Protestant school, and his wife, showed the lonely young Englishman great kindness. Every Sunday

afternoon found him in their hospitable home, and with their help he made rapid progress in acquiring the language. When he had been only six weeks in Spain he gave his first public address at the Christian Endeavour meeting, which was held on Sunday evenings, and each Sunday after that he spoke for a few minutes. On the increased attendances Percy modestly commented, " I suppose my queer Spanish was the attraction." Or was it the magnetism of Christ drawing people to Himself through one who was wholly yielded to his Lord ?

Largely unversed in the Roman Catholic religion, and unaware of the superstitious fears that enslave a people where the Church of Rome holds sway, Percy Buffard went to Spain in the belief that it was a Christian country, and that missionary work would consist for the most part, in witnessing to individuals. But he had not been long in Santander before he saw the need to revise his opinion. He soon discovered that Roman Catholicism had no purifying effect upon the lives of the people; in fact, many who seemed to be most religious were foremost in every kind of vice and worldly pleasure, using religion as a cloak for their evil deeds.

Most of the guests in the boarding house professed to be Roman Catholics, but in conversation with them, and by observing their manner of life, the newcomer was forced to the conclusion that few had any faith at all, some being avowed atheists. They seldom or never went to church, and their presence in the streets on the occasions of religious processions was dictated mainly by a love for pageantry.

It was in contacts with priests that Percy made the most disconcerting discoveries. During the two years he spent in the boarding house he met and conversed with scores who made it their headquarters when visiting Santander. Their lack of spirituality was appalling and their ignorance of the Scriptures abysmal. He had no difficulty in getting into conversation with them, for invariably they were induced by a Jesuit, who was a permanent boarder, to start an argument with the one Protestant present. Although there was never any evidence that they were influenced, these arguments often resulted in long and earnest conversations with other guests whose interest had been awakened.

On one occasion two priests living near sent him an invitation to visit them. He accepted it, although half suspecting a plot. They gave him a cordial welcome and made known their purpose with the flattering remark that they thought it a pity that such a good young man should go astray in religion. Confident of their own ability to be victorious in argument, they had misjudged their visitor's skill in debate, and he soon had them hopelessly cornered. Having steered conversation into a discussion on celibacy, he told them that Paul taught that a bishop must be married, and opening his Douai version of the New Testament, read 1 Timothy 3: 2, upon which they declared that his copy must be falsified.

" Well, have you not a Bible or New Testament ? " he asked.

One priest said he thought he had a New Testament somewhere, and went to search for it. After some time he returned with one which proved to be the same edition, but he could not find the Epistle. It was found for him and he was told to read the third chapter aloud from the first verse. At the second verse he hesitated, but was admonished by his fellow priest to continue, and in a faltering voice he read, " A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife."

CHAPTER 3

FORTH IN FAITH

EVERY day brought to the young language teacher fresh revelations of the outrageous demands of the Roman Church. Increasingly he became aware of the religious pressures that were brought to bear upon the minds of the people. They affected the thinking of all classes, not merely that of the simple peasant folk. Among his students was a highly educated man to whom he sought to present the truths of the Gospel, but with intellect conditioned to reject every religious concept that differed from Roman Catholic teaching, he terminated the conversation abruptly with the assertion, " I must not listen to you; my Church does all my thinking for me on that subject."

The application of these pressures was inhuman in its total disregard for the mental or physical suffering it caused. One morning Mr. Buffard saw a woman with a little girl leaving Don Acosta's school. Noticing that both were weeping, he enquired as to the cause of their distress, and was told that this widow, anxious to give her daughter a good education, had taken her away from the Roman Catholic school because after three or four years she was still scarcely able to read or write, although she knew the catechism by heart. After several months at the Protestant school she was making rapid progress, but the priest, having been informed that she was attending the school, visited the mother and threatened to instruct her employer to dismiss her unless she removed the child. Work was scarce, and the poor widow felt that she had no option but to obey.

The masterpiece of the whole deceitful system seemed to be the superstition deliberately fostered by the invention of fantastic legends associated with the Virgin Mary. On a hill some distance from Santander a shrine had been built for the Virgin. Enquiring as to its origin, Mr. Buffard was told that on entering the church in Santander one morning some years before, the priest found that the Virgin was missing. A search party was organized and eventually she

was found on this hill. On hearing this the priest exclaimed, " What a wonderful miracle ! The Virgin has flown there all by herself. It is a sign that she wants a shrine built for her on that hill."

The shrine was erected, and capital made out of it, for it was claimed that as she had performed so great a miracle, masses said to her were worth much more than those offered to other Virgins who were not possessed of such miraculous powers.

Mr. Buffard wandered round the building, and on the floor in a corner he found a crucifix, broken and dirty, and bearing every mark of neglect. As he gazed at the dilapidated object its parabolic significance burst upon him. Recounting his reactions, he said, " I thought to myself that here was a picture of Spain—the Virgin exalted and worshipped as Saviour; Christ despised and neglected and thrust into the background."

In order to acquaint himself more thoroughly with the teachings of Rome, Mr. Buffard frequently attended Roman Catholic services when a sermon was announced. Of these occasions he said, " Nearly always it was on the merits and miracles of a particular Saint or Virgin. Never once have I heard Christ proclaimed as the Saviour of mankind; in fact, His only claim to merit seemed to be that He was born of the Virgin."

Pursuing his intention to be a self-supporting missionary, Mr. Buffard availed himself of every opportunity of spreading the good news of salvation in and around Santander, distributing tracts and Gospels to all who would receive them. For three years he continued in this way, but his time was very much occupied with teaching and he could only pay occasional visits to surrounding villages and towns. But wherever he went he found dense spiritual darkness and no one to take the light of the Gospel.

" More and more my heart became burdened," he confessed, " until at last I had no doubt that the Lord was calling me to give up my whole time to the work of evangelizing Spain."

Evangelizing Spain ! That was his vision to the end of his life; the entire country was laid upon his heart. The call constituted a crisis, and as such presented problems.

To relinquish his post at the language school would raise the question of maintenance. Then there was the matter of training for full-time missionary service. Although for a number of years he had been a keen Bible student, and by evening and correspondence classes had sought to fit himself for whatever work the Lord might have for him, he felt that he needed more specific preparation. So, convinced that he knew the mind of the Lord, he terminated his teaching appointment and returned to England.

Through the generosity of the Committee of Regent's Park Baptist Theological College, of which Dr. G. Pearce Gould was then Principal, he was admitted for a three years' course, during which he partly maintained himself by translation work. A unique and fascinating task was to translate for the British Museum many of the logbooks and documents recovered from the captured or wrecked ships of the Spanish Armada. He ever looked back to College days with gratitude for the spiritual and intellectual enrichment and the deepening of his evangelistic zeal which he then experienced.

In his second year he made known his desire to spend the summer vacation in Spain. His eager spirit was becoming impatient to plunge into the work, and the vacation provided several weeks that could be used for evangelistic endeavour. A few interested friends supplied the money to cover his expenses, and away he went, determined to make the utmost use of this grand opportunity.

In some of the towns and villages he was encouraged to find fruit for his former labours. In one place he was recognized by a hotel manager who said, " When you were here three years ago you gave me a booklet which I have been reading ever since. But there are some things I cannot understand; could you explain them to me ? "

The booklet was a Gospel of Mark which, he said, he had read in secret, aware that if it were known, the penalty would be loss of employment. To this soul, prepared by the Holy Spirit, the way of salvation was expounded.

Laredo, the next town to be visited, held memories for Mr. Buffard. When he was last there, he was warned of a plot to kill him and advised to leave immediately. But he had continued his witness, and the restraining hand of God kept his enemies at bay. Now he was here again, and was

soon ordered by the priest to stop distributing Gospels. When he politely refused, the priest retorted, " What you are doing is quite useless. Another fool was here three years ago doing the same thing, but from my pulpit I ordered my parishioners to bring me all the booklets they had received, and I burnt them."

" That is interesting," Mr. Buffard commented, " how many did you collect ? "

" About forty," was the reply.

Looking up the record of that visit Mr. Buffard found that he had distributed a hundred Gospels, and rejoiced to know that more than half had escaped the destructive hands of the priest. It was a privilege to be called a fool for Christ's sake !

In order to gain a clear conception of what was being done in Spain, Mr. Buffard devoted a part of the vacation trip to visiting Protestant centres of witness. In Madrid, which he saw for the first time, he visited churches of various denominations, enjoying happy fellowship with all. He then went by invitation of a German Mission to see their work in the Provinces of Badajoz and Cáceres, afterwards proceeding to the historic city of Salamanca, where he met the aged Pastor of the Episcopal Church connected with the Spanish and Portuguese Church Aid Society.

With the end of the vacation in sight, he turned northward, deciding to travel to the border via Galicia. While there he visited the fanatical city of Santiago de Compostela, where there was no evangelical witness. It provided one of the most exciting incidents of his trip. After spending the morning distributing Gospels and tracts, he had lunch with two medical students whom he had met in Santander. Meanwhile, the police, having been informed of his activities, went to his hotel, and finding him missing, they searched his belongings and illegally confiscated all his literature. They then sent the towncrier through all the main streets to give a description of him as a " wanted " person. By this means he was located, and in the middle of the meal the door was flung open by a policeman, who ordered him to accompany him. With quiet dignity Mr. Buffard asked what he meant by interrupting a gentleman while at lunch, and promised to go with him when he had

finished. Somewhat abashed by his calm and confident attitude, the policeman waited, and when he was ready, marched him off to the Town Hall, where they learned that the Mayor could not see him until 6 p.m. He protested that he had an appointment that evening at Marin, and the last train left at 4 p.m., but the order was repeated. He returned to his hotel after telegraphing to the Governor of the Province and the Consul, and police watched the building to ensure his remaining in the town. At the appointed hour he went again to the Town Hall and was brought before the Mayor, whose apologetic manner was sufficient evidence that he had been reprimanded by the Governor. Excusing himself on the plea that he had been misinformed, he suggested that Mr. Buffard should leave the city by the next train. But he was not prepared to be dismissed in this way after the treatment he had received, and he told the Mayor that having missed his engagement at Marin he would stay as long as he chose. Nor was that all.

" What about my books that you stole from my hotel ? " he asked. The Mayor stammered an apology and promised to return them immediately.

The chief of police, upon whom he then called, was also apologetic and said it was the priests who had insisted upon his arrest.

The publicity gained had effects far other than were intended. Earlier that day Mr. Buffard had called at the Socialist Club and left some literature with the porter. Passing it again that evening, he was invited to enter and was publicly thanked for the stand he had made for liberty. Still more wonderful was the invitation to return a little later to give a talk on his beliefs. At the time appointed he found a capacity audience awaiting his arrival, to whom he had the joy of preaching the Gospel.

That was the last and crowning incident of the vacation trip. A few days later he was back at College, where he remained for another year, leaving on June 28th, 1913. Nothing was more certain than that Spain was the land to which he was called, but to his dismay he found that no Society would undertake to send him there. Some would have accepted him for other spheres, but he could not disobey the divine voice. So, although without means of

subsistence, he decided to go in faith, trusting God to meet every need, and on December 8th, 1913, he set out again for Spain. Thus the Spanish Gospel Mission was born.

At the command of God Abraham went out, not knowing whither. Percy Buffard went to Spain not knowing how he was to be sustained. But for two years the Lord had been preparing to meet this situation. While spending the winter of 1911-1912 in north Spain, Pastor and Mrs. Joseph Smale, of Hitherfield Road Free Church, Streatham, heard of the missionary zeal of a young English teacher who had gone home to England to take a college course in preparation for whole-time service in Spain. Shortly after their return to London in the spring of 1912, they received a letter which contained the information that this young man was studying at Regent's Park College. They arranged to meet him, thereafter enlisting the interest and practical sympathy of their members in his proposed vacation visit to Spain that summer. Eventually Pastor Smale became the first Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the Mission.

CHAPTER 4

THE MISSION TAKES ROOT

WITH Principal G. Pearce Gould, Dr. F. B. Meyer, Mrs. Donald Campbell and Sir John Kirk as Referees, and himself as the Founder and sole missionary of the Spanish Gospel Mission, Percy Buffard returned to the land of his adoption without any clear guidance as to where he was to establish headquarters. The whole country with its desperate need was before him, and he earnestly desired to discern the Lord's will in this matter.

He was back in Santander, and he wondered whether he was to remain there. Within the Province there were countless towns and villages where nothing was known of God's saving grace, but it had a centre of evangelical witness in the Capital, and a certain amount of colportage work was being done. This could not be said of many parts of the country, and he felt the tug of the unreached provinces. However, he stayed in Santander for a while, his movements for the first week or two being restricted by stormy weather. As soon as it improved, he set off for Torrelavega, a fanatical town of some 10,000 inhabitants, about twenty miles away. Armed with the Mayor's permission to sell his literature, he disposed of about seventy booklets, and had many interesting conversations with individuals. A man, hearing the words " St. Matthew ", concluded that the stranger was peddling relics of some saint possessed of miraculous powers, and asked, " Will they cure sickness ? " Such is the mentality induced by the Roman Church's stranglehold upon the minds of its adherents.

Twice that day the missionary was interrupted, first by a policeman, who thought to make an arrest until shown the Mayor's sanction, and then by a well-dressed man who warned the group who were listening to an explanation of the way of salvation, that the books for sale were Protestant. Upon being invited to compare them with Mr. Buffard's Romanist Testament, he retreated. But his intrusion had aroused the curiosity of others who gathered round, and more Gospels were sold.

While in this town the missionary made a most interesting discovery. In the course of visitation he came across a woman who had been converted through the instrumentality of Pastor and Mrs. Smale during their stay in Santander. There her husband had lost his work because of her known connection with the evangelical chapel, and they had moved to Torrelavega, where she was continuing to bear her witness.

News from the field must be constantly supplied if interest in the work is to be maintained and widened. Although circumstances often made it difficult to preserve unbroken the link with the homeland, Mr. Buffard regarded this as an essential duty. His first newsletter reached this country in January 1914. In it he expressed his gratitude to friends who had generously responded to his need, sending him forth well equipped for immediate necessities, and provided with a better outfit than he had expected. He concluded, " I regret I cannot as yet give any definite information as to my future plans. I expect to be in this Province until the last Sunday in January, working as weather permits in the towns and villages near the Capital. Then by the first Sunday in February I hope to be in Logrono, further inland. My length of stay there will depend upon the weather. Most of the places I visit will be entirely without the gracious influence of the Gospel, and I would ask your prayers that the Gospels distributed and the word spoken may bring forth much fruit in the coming days. The moral and spiritual degradation of these people is unspeakable, and their only hope is in shaking off the superstitious and heathen customs of Rome, and embracing the pure and saving faith of the Gospel. Alas that in the majority of cases they have none to tell them of the better way."

By now Mr. Buffard had reached the conclusion that an exploratory tour of Spain to discover the most neglected areas would help him to solve the problem of his own immediate field. He mapped out an extensive itinerary that kept him on the move for a year and a half, during which time he travelled nearly 11,000 miles, much of it in mountainous country, and most of it on his bicycle, the roads often being little more than rough tracks.

Of the discomforts and hazards of that journey he kept his friends informed, that they might cover him with their prayers. Many nights were spent in dirty inns because there was nowhere else to stay. Describing one such experience he said, " I expected to find an inn on the way, but alas for my expectations ! I went from village to village and no place to sleep. I had one offer to share the bed with the family, but I could not bring myself to accept it, though it would not have appeared strange or indecent to them. But night was coming on, rain was beginning to fall, and I began to wonder what I should do. Had it been fine, the prospect of cycling all night would not have alarmed me, for the moon was full, and it would have been rather pleasant. But the weather was very threatening, and the clouds completely shut out the light of the moon. However, at last I came to a tavern where they had a bed to spare, so I thankfully took advantage of it, though I did not like the look of things. After a frugal supper of eggs, bread and cheese, and tea without sugar or milk, I went upstairs to my room. They looked a rather rough lot down below and I felt tempted to barricade my door. But I guess if they had wanted to rob me, that would not stop them, so I left it."

It was an uncomfortable and almost sleepless night, despite a plentiful sprinkling of insect powder !

Of a kitchen, typical of many in which he took his meals, he drew a graphic picture. " The floor was of earth and pretty well carpeted with refuse. In one corner was the large clay oven, which was evidently the roosting place for the fowls who were scratching on the floor. Several swallows' nests were in the ceiling and the birds were flying in and out. A large pot was on the fire, which, as usual, was on the floor, and the ceiling was perfectly black with smoke. Several instruments for spinning flax were in one corner, and another corner was used as a stable for the donkey. There were no pigs, strange to say."

In such kitchens his meetings were often held, and speaking was difficult when he was almost suffocated with the smoke from the fire, and throat and eyes were smarting. But all was endured that perishing souls might hear the life-giving message. The whole of this tour was a missionary journey in every sense of the word, for, like the Apostle Paul, he preached Christ in every place he touched.

In his March letter that year he asked for prayer " that God will make clear to me His will as to my future sphere of work. In the neighbouring Province of Castellón de la Plana there is a great need for a Gospel centre, and many friends have been praying that God would send a worker there. It is indeed difficult to decide when the field is so large and the labourers so few."

That request went out from Santander, to which he had returned, and from whence he went to spend a few days in Castellón, the Capital. He held meetings every afternoon and evening, and two or three people professed conversion. While there he was the guest of Mr. Ecroyd, an English Quaker who had a bicycle business in the town. His wife was Spanish, the daughter of a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society, who conducted a small Sunday School and was very anxious to see evangelical work established in Castellón.

Of his plan to spend part of July in the Province of Guipuzcoa, he wrote, " I am assured that in some of the villages I anticipate visiting, a stoning is inevitable. But someone must be first, and the majority of our brethren out here have had to suffer the same or worse in opening up fresh work, so I do not feel that I ought to draw back. But I would ask your prayers."

There, despite natural shrinking from danger, was the true apostolic spirit that could say with Paul, " None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

He went to Guipuzcoa, where he met with much opposition, but suffered no personal injury, although this was often threatened. Several times he was arrested, but as he was a British subject, the authorities feared to put him in prison. In one village he and a pastor who accompanied him were rescued from a howling mob headed by the priest; in another place a few miles away, the priest stirred up the women of the town, and the two men were surrounded by three or four hundred who, with their hands clawing the

air within a few inches of their faces, declared their intention to tear their hair and pluck out their eyes. They were saved by the police, who escorted them to the Town Hall, where they remained until it was safe to emerge and make their way home by a circuitous route.

Early in 1915 Mr. Buffard paid another visit to Castellón, staying five weeks and holding meetings in private houses, as no hall was available. There were good attendances, and those who came showed great interest. Apart from one occasion, when stones were thrown, there was little opposition. He also visited nearby towns and villages, and in communicating his impressions he said, " From what I have seen of Castellón and district, I feel that it would make a good centre for aggressive evangelistic work, and believe that the Lord will have me settle there."

The question as to when and where the Spanish Gospel Mission was to take root was of great personal interest to Percy Buffard. It was also a matter of tremendous moment to Miss Ella M. Pannell, of Hove. They had met for the first time when, with her father, who was keenly interested in the mission halls of Sussex, and other members of her family, she stayed at the home in Ditchling of Mr. Buffard senior. Thereafter the two families became intimate, and between the two young people a friendship developed which ripened into love. In 1913, at the completion of Percy's college course, they were engaged. Now, having decided to settle in Castellón, he could contemplate marriage, and in the summer of 1915 he returned to England to claim his bride. " You will have the privilege of supporting two missionaries in the field instead of one," he told his friends. That, to him, was an overweight of joy.

Chapter 5

OPPOSITION!

THE first World War was in its second year when on a September day in 1915 Percy Buffard assisted his young bride as she stepped from the train at Santander. To her the scene was so strange; to him so familiar, yet how different was this arrival from every other that had preceded it ! His homeless itineraries were at an end. Henceforth he would have an anchorage, and the comfort, companionship and help of one who was called, as surely as he, to serve the Lord in Spain, and was willing to link her life with his in missionary endeavour.

But with characteristic consideration he did not take her straight to Castellón, where immediately he would have been immersed in the affairs of the Mission. Giving her time to become somewhat accustomed to the new environment, he arranged to cover the journey from Santander in easy stages. For a while they spent their time visiting outlying villages, where Mrs. Buffard had her first experience of tract evangelism in Spain, and saw for herself the country's vast spiritual need. It was seven years since Mr. Buffard had been in one of the villages, and so far as he was able to ascertain, no Christian worker had been in the meantime.

Deciding to move on, they went first to Madrid and then to Valencia, where they attended a five-day convention.

Eventually arriving at Castellón, they received a warm welcome from the few Christians in the town, where rooms in which they were to make their home had been secured. " As soon as we get all our things I think we shall be fairly comfortable—as far as one can be in this land of discomforts," was Percy Buffard's cautious comment.

A hall in which to hold meetings was offered rent free by Mr. Ecroyd, the Englishman who had a bicycle business in the town. He had just built for himself a house, at one end of which was a large, well-ventilated room with a

separate entrance. It seemed the ideal place in which to commence work, and Mr. Buffard at once took steps to have it authorized for public worship.

But the enemy was not content to let this invasion of his territory pass uncontested. When the necessary documents had been deposited, the sanitary inspector came to see if the room conformed to the requirements of the law. It satisfied all hygienic demands, so the Government architect was sent to inspect the structure. Determined to find an excuse to ban its use for public meetings, he called to his aid a law demanding a floor resistance of 850 lbs. to the square yard. No hall in Castellón fulfilled this condition, but he insisted that as it did not meet the requirements, it could not be authorized unless the necessary alterations were made. An alternative was to limit attendances to thirty-five.

Structural alterations could not be undertaken, and public meetings could not be held under the imposed condition, but there was nothing to prevent Mr. Ecroyd inviting friends to his home. This he did, gathering about twenty people on Sundays and Thursdays to hear the Word of God.

But how frustrating was the situation in view of the vast need all around ! Was there no answer ? Then came the God-given thought that some headway might be made with Spanish help, and soon an urgent prayer request was on its way to England.

" I am anxious," wrote the missionary, " to employ a native evangelist as soon as possible, and shall be glad of your earnest prayer that the needed funds may be forthcoming. We could well employ fifty evangelists had we the means and the men."

Recognizing in this early experience a token of what was to be expected, he continued, " We shall need your prayers more than ever in the future. Private opposition is already making itself felt, and when we are able to commence public meetings, this is sure to increase."

The pernicious influence exerted upon the minds of people by the agents of Rome was startlingly illustrated in the opinion expressed by a very religious woman in the town, who declared that it would have been better had Mr.

Ecroyd let his room for immoral purposes than to wretched heretics.

A change of Government at the beginning of 1916, with Liberals in power, gave rise to the hope that public meetings would then be permitted, but the Governor's secretary, who had instigated the opposition, took the unusual course of remaining in office. When it leaked out that attendances at the private meetings were increasing, the priests held a counter-mission in the town, urging the faithful to break up the gatherings. In Castellón at that time were members of a Catholic Union that two years earlier had made an abortive attempt at the wholesale massacre of Protestants attending a meeting at Barcelona. About twenty of these young men came into a meeting and started to create a disturbance. Tactfully reminding them that Spanish gentlemen were known for their courtesy, Mr. Buffard asked to be allowed a hearing, after which, he said, he would be happy to listen to them. The plea commanded their respect, and soon they were following the address with close attention. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit could be felt, and after the meeting, they joined in a friendly discussion in which they confessed their bewilderment at finding Protestant teaching so different from what the priests had led them to believe.

On the following Sunday a stone came hurtling through the window, but no one was injured. The next day the Chief of Police sent for Mr. Buffard and told him that the meetings must be discontinued until he had the Secretary's permission. After failing to gain full satisfaction from that gentleman, Mr. Buffard obtained an introduction to the Governor. A liberal-minded man, and anti-clerical, he received him kindly, gave him permission to hold meetings, and promised that he should not be molested again.

The Romanists, nevertheless, kept up their attacks by stone-throwing and spilling ammonia on the floor of the room, but such tactics had the effect of sending more people to the meetings to see who and what these Protestants were, until the average attendance was more than double what it was before the persecution commenced.

Then the priests adopted the subtle and more dangerous method of intensive house to house visitation, instilling into

the minds of the occupants the vilest calumnies with regard to the missionaries, affirming that they were devils incarnate.

In the midst of this determined opposition the Lord graciously granted a token for good. On the evening of Sunday, June 11th, at the close of a solemn and impressive service, Mr. Buffard was led to announce an after-meeting for any who desired to know more. Not a soul moved, and after prayer and further exhortation he asked those who were willing to follow the Lord Jesus Christ to testify by standing, reminding them of the persecution they would almost certainly suffer. Four men were the first to rise, then they were joined by others, until twenty or thirty people were on their feet. With knowledge born of experience the missionary recognized that this did not mean that all had accepted Christ as Saviour. Such was their ignorance that they would need much teaching before they would have sufficient understanding to take the decisive step, and thereafter the Thursday evening service was devoted to the instruction of inquirers.

Soon after that remarkable service there was the usual exodus of all who were able to escape from the summer heat of Castellón. The majority of those who remained were busy harvesting, and the numbers attending the meetings were drastically reduced.

But June brought domestic joy to Mr. and Mrs. Buffard, for on the 25th their little daughter was born. They gave her the Spanish name Margarita, and from her birth she was a little missionary, enticing to the house children who through fear of the priests had stayed away from Sunday School. Curious to see an English baby, they crept stealthily to her home, and always before they left there was hymn-singing, which they loved, and a little Bible talk.

Chapter 6

END OF THE FIRST PHASE

THAT summer news reached Castellón that held unsuspected significance for the future of the work. Special meetings had been held in the Province of Ciudad Real under the auspices of the Spanish branch of what was then known as the World's Evangelical Alliance, with the result that three large towns had asked for a mission to be established.

In the proffered services of a young Spanish student, a keen Christian who had previously given similar assistance, Mr. Buffard saw a partial answer to this Macedonian call. He arranged for him to spend a week at Valdepenas, one of the towns that had asked for help, the British and Foreign Bible Society generously co-operating by releasing Senor Vacas, a colporteur, to be with him. Tremendous interest was evoked. The Republican Hall was lent for a meeting that was attended by 200 men; homes were opened for meetings and the people pleaded with the evangelists to extend their stay or, if that were impossible, to send someone to live and work among them.

Hearing from Demetrio of the liberty they had enjoyed and the success that had attended their labours, Mr. Buffard sent off an urgent S.O.S. to the home front.

" If funds permitted," he wrote, " I could send a man there for at least three months at a cost of £12 to £16. But what we need specially to pray for is a permanent evangelist for that district."

Demetrio spent the remainder of his vacation working in the mountain villages of Castellón, which, because of ill-health, Mr. Buffard had not been able to visit. Later, accompanied by a Swedish missionary from Valencia, he followed up Demetrio's work in a tour of some of these almost inaccessible places.

To reach Cirat, a remote mountain village, they broke their journey at Montanejos, having left their bicycles *en route* and continuing the path over the mountains on

donkeys. At night they held a meeting, and covered the rest of the journey on foot, the mountain track being too steep and rocky even for donkeys. Living at Cirat was Don Angel, an ex-colporteur and his wife, who warmly welcomed the missionaries, and arranged a meeting for that night. As the visitors were unable to obtain a bed in the village, they offered them a mattress on the floor of their own room. There they spent the night, but because of the discomfort and the smells and the insects coming through cracks in the floor from the combined stable, pig-sty and fowl-house below, they were glad when the first streaks of dawn gave them an excuse to rise.

In barest outline, and without comment as to the demand upon strength and endurance, Mr. Buffard described the return journey.

" After a frugal breakfast of bread and milk, we made our way back slowly over the mountains to Montanejos and stayed there for the night. We were thus able to hold another meeting, which was crowded out, the people listening with great attention. The next morning we started back on our eighty-mile journey to Valencia, and as we had not enough money to hire donkeys, we had to rise before four in order to tramp over the mountains, part of the way by moonlight, to where we had left our cycles, and were glad when at length we reached our destination."

From that time Cirat became associated with the Mission. A Sunday meeting was started in Don Angel's home, and Mr. Buffard made him an allowance to enable him to visit the surrounding villages.

Toward the end of 1916 the Evangelical Alliance arranged meetings in different parts of Spain in an effort to arouse public opinion on the matter of religious liberty. Mr. Buffard joined forces with them and launched a campaign in Castellón and other towns in the province. Writing afterwards of this venture he said, " We had no difficulty in obtaining the loan of halls from the Republicans and Labour Clubs in the various towns. Great interest was shown, and in two cases attendance was well over 500. The question of ' liberty of conscience ' was treated from the political point of view, but this gave us an opportunity of placing our ideals before the public and creating an

atmosphere favourable to our work and us. I am still undecided as to whether this method of propaganda is worth the energy and expense, and shall be better able to form an opinion when I come to work over the ground thus broken up. It is significant that a colporteur who has since visited one of the towns found that our meeting had predisposed the people to be friendly and to purchase his books."

The response to the request for additional funds to place a worker at Valdepenas for three months fell short of the required sum, but the Bible Society made it possible by making up the deficiency, and again lending Senor Vacas.

Anticipating the criticism that it was madness to assume further responsibility when funds were scarcely adequate for the maintenance of existing work, Mr. Buffard wrote, " What can I do ? The people there are literally crying out for the Gospel and there is no one else to take it to them. All around me the doors are shut, and need much hard work to make them open, while in Valdepenas the door is invitingly open. Dare we refuse ? In any case I feel the Lord is calling me to that work, and I cannot stay to think what my friends may say about it."

Senor Vacas commenced work at Valdepenas in February 1917. Mr. Buffard was there to receive him, and the landlord of the inn where they stayed allowed them to hold meetings every evening on his premises. In May Mr. Buffard went again and found even greater liberty. They held open-air meetings in the public Square, on one occasion forming a procession and marching to the house where the meeting was to be held. Every morning Senor Vacas had a Bible stall in the market place, where he had an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to those who came to enquire about his books.

Becoming alarmed, the priests warned the people against attending the meetings and distributed leaflets in which Protestants were abused in disgusting language. The Republicans, who had lent their hall for meetings, countered these infamous attacks by printing and distributing a large number of tracts at their own expense.

So successful was the work that the Bible Society consented to an extension of the arrangement for a few months,

and in November of that year, at Mr. Buffard's invitation, and with the permission of the Bible Society, Senor Vacas joined the Spanish Gospel Mission as its first national worker.

While there had been great encouragement in the extension of the Mission's sphere, 1917 had been a difficult year during which exceptional demands had been made upon Mr. Buffard. Never robust, he had been in very poor health, yet he had travelled over 3,500 miles and had visited some thirty towns and villages. Twice he met serious opposition. In one town where he joined a colporteur in selling Gospels, the Mayor and police succeeded in gathering a rabble of men, women and children, who followed them shouting threats of stoning and death. Obviously they were prepared to carry them into effect, and the two men wisely retreated to their lodging.

The Province of Castellón was indeed a hard and unresponsive field. The small reward for much toil was very disheartening. Some for whom bright hopes had been entertained, fell away under the pressure of persecution, and many young people ceased to attend the meetings when they started work for fear of losing their situations.

" Pray for us that we may not faint nor grow weary in the upward, toilsome way ! " was the cry wrung from the missionary's heart as he reviewed the disappointing results of his labours.

It had been arranged that Senor Vacas and his wife and family should move to Valdepenas in March 1918. The funds of the Mission had never been so low as they were at that time, and the Buffard household had been living from hand to mouth, albeit from the Lord's hand, and although faith had often been tried to the utmost, they had never really been in want. But now, with resources almost exhausted, the money to pay for the evangelist's removal, a month's rent in advance and a month's salary had to be found, and in the Lord's wonderful timing, a cheque that was sufficient to cover all these expenses arrived at the eleventh hour.

For nearly a year Mr. Buffard had been seeking guidance as to whether he should leave Castellón and establish new field headquarters at Valdepenas, where the opportunities

to evangelize the entire district were greater than Senor Vacas could compass alone. But for the time being he was deterred by concern for the few believers who were so dependent upon him for spiritual help. Then, meeting Don Miguel Aguilera, a young miller who for some years had felt that the Lord was calling him to full-time service, he invited him to join the evangelist in the work at Valdepenas. The financial situation did not warrant this extra burden, but Mr. Buffard had acted as he was prompted by the Holy Spirit, and faith that had dared to obey was honoured, for friends in the homeland, who knew nothing of this new appointment, signified their intention to " adopt " Senor Vacas, and sent the first draft of £20 for his support.

About this time the dark shadow of bereavement fell upon the missionaries' home. At the engaging age of twenty-two months little Margarita went to be with the Lord. Yet in the midst of their sorrow her parents were able to rejoice that at her funeral many heard the Gospel proclaimed. A few days later God gave them a little son.

Soon there were unmistakable signs that the pillar of cloud was moving in the direction of Valdepenas, and Mr. and Mrs. Buffard began to make preparations for their departure thither. Acquainting supporters with this important decision, Mr. Buffard said, " I shall, of course, keep in touch with believers (in Castellón) both by visits and correspondence, and I have made arrangements for services to be held there every Sunday with the help of workers in Valencia. We do not regret our stay here. Though the results have been small, much seed has been sown which we believe will, in due time, bear fruit, though perhaps we may not reap the harvest. After all, our part is to do God's will and leave the rest to Him."

The first phase of the Mission's history had prepared the way for greater things, of which an earnest was given before Mr. Buffard's departure, for at almost the last meeting two girls professed conversion.

CHAPTER 7

ENCOURAGEMENTS AND TRIALS

HAVING annexed the Province of Cuidad Real to his parish, Mr. Buffard was working in a tract of country considerably larger than Wales where there were some 3,000,000 inhabitants. A third national evangelist had been added, and in his large territory the missionary and his Spanish helpers were the only Christian workers.

Early in 1919 an epidemic of influenza swept through Valdepenas, and for a time cottage meetings were discontinued. With their normal activities curtailed, missionaries and evangelists gave themselves to prayer, and when the epidemic had subsided, a new spirit of enquiry manifested itself in crowded attendances at the Hall and pressing invitations to hold meetings in private houses. In addition, the Socialists asked for an evangelistic meeting to be held in their Hall; a unique request, since most Spanish Socialists were anti-religious. About 150 people, mostly men, were present, and listened with great attention. Soon afterwards the Republicans offered their Hall, and at that meeting nearly 200 people heard the Gospel, many for the first time.

Meanwhile, a movement of the Spirit of God among young men became evident, several openly confessing their faith in Christ. One who had images in his house, destroyed them all and put Bible texts in their place. He also set apart one room for meetings.

Mr. Buffard made the utmost use of the liberty he now enjoyed. Within a few weeks of his arrival in Valdepenas he instituted a class for systematic Bible study for any who might be interested. As Spaniards are not studious by nature, he did not expect more than five. Twenty came, and the average attendance remained steadily at that level.

Hoping in time to decentralize the work by training the

evangelists to take responsibility, he arranged for them to spend one week visiting villages and one week in Valdepenas alternately, the mornings in Valdepenas being devoted to Bible study under his tuition.

A delightful spirit of co-operation existed between Mr. Buffard and the Spanish workers. He ever esteemed them true " yoke-fellows " in the Gospel, and often, with the humility that marks the truly great soul, he withheld reports of his own work to tell of their exploits for the Lord. For them it was always an inspiring and instructive experience to be with him in some evangelistic effort. One Sunday afternoon the missionary and the evangelists, with their wives and families and a few friends went outside the town and sat down by the roadside, their idea being to attract people in order to preach the Gospel to them. Protestant open-air meetings in Spain were illegal, but they were prepared to risk imprisonment if by this means the glorious news of salvation could be made known to some who might otherwise never hear it. They began to sing hymns to the accompaniment of Mr. Buffard's violin. Soon a considerable crowd had collected, and without any interference from authorities, they listened with eager interest to the old, old story that to them was so very new.

Everywhere they went they had people flocking to hear the message and pleading for a teacher to be sent to live among them, in some instances offering to build or rent a hall. Resources and manpower were utterly inadequate to meet these demands, and in agony of soul Mr. Buffard used all his powers of persuasion to make the situation known, devoting several pages of one issue of the Mission's little magazine to give descriptions of some of these places, concluding each with the refrain, printed in heavy type, " But there is no one to send."

These challenging appeals were followed by " A cry of distress ", written by the evangelist, Senor Aguilera.

" To my reader. Who are you ? Ah ! so long as a passionate love for Christ is burning within your breast, it matters little to me that I know not your circumstances or social position. Wherever and whatever you are, you can help us. We need you and cry to you for help. Will you refuse it ?

" I do not doubt that often you have felt a desire to work for Christ, but perhaps you have not known where to direct your energies, your attention and your prayers, and this may have caused your zeal to diminish. But there is a need so great, that when you become aware of it, I am sure that in you we shall find the help, the strength and stay that we so much need.

" Have you ever thought of Spain ? If not, it is because you have not realized her need. Think of Spain, full of indifference. Think of Spain, full of idolatry. Think of Spain, sunk in the awful abyss of practical heathenism. Then look to Christ, and consider that He alone, through the preaching of His Word, can deliver Spain from her awful condition. What will *you* say ? Will you not respond to our cry and come over and help us ?

" I have always had a longing to visit you, to greet you personally, but if, one day, the Lord allows me that privilege, it will be to say to you from the depths of my heart, ' Brethren ! Remember Spain. Pray for Spain. Work for Spain.'

Yours in the bonds of Christ,
A Spaniard who loves his country,
MIGUEL AGUILERA."

With the War over, and conditions returning to normal, Mr. and Mrs. Buffard and their little son came home for furlough in the spring of 1919. For the first time the evangelists were left in charge of the field, a fact that caused the missionary some anxiety, but as their reports began to arrive, his fears were set at rest. A third Spanish worker had been added just before he left Spain, and all were able to tell of blessing upon the work and of the Lord's intervention in times of difficulty.

In one of his letters Senor Vacas quoted an instance of divine overruling at Puertollano, a large mining town where work had been commenced some time before.

" The brethren at Puertollano," he wrote, " have taken a larger house and wanted me to open one room as a hall. The Mayor refused to allow it, and as he would not give way, I had to go to the Capital of the province, Ciudad Real, to interview the Governor. He received me very

kindly and gave me written authorization to open the hall. The very next day the Government fell and the Conservatives came into power. The new Governor would certainly have put every obstacle in our way, so we were just in time."

Senor Aguilera told of meetings lasting far into the night, and of people going to their homes and bringing back rosaries, crucifixes and pictures of the Virgin and saints to be destroyed.

Meanwhile, Mr. Buffard was spending a strenuous six months in the homeland, where he covered some 6,000 miles as he travelled the length and breadth of the British Isles, appealing for workers.

Speaking one Saturday evening at a prayer meeting in South London, he had in his congregation a schoolboy who sat enthralled as he listened to Mr. Buffard's stories of adventures for Christ in pagan Spain. On leaving the church he took a copy of the booklet containing the urgent appeals. The refrain in black type, " But there is no one to send," became imprinted upon his young heart, and later, kneeling beside his bed, he told the Lord, " If there is no one to send, I will go." That vow was registered in heaven and never forgotten by the lad, but many years had to pass before it was performed.

But the appeals, printed and spoken, were not without immediate results, for when Mr. and Mrs. Buffard returned to Spain, they took with them three new workers, one of whom was Miss C. M. Gardner, who out of her own slender means, aided by a few friends, had made herself responsible for the support of one of the evangelists, and now felt that she must give herself. She was a special gift from the Lord. A woman of many parts, she was moved to offer her services at a time when, unexpectedly, the work was about to develop in a new direction, to which, with her particular qualification, she was able to make a very important contribution.

For some time after their arrival in Spain, the party knew what it was to suffer severe financial stringency; not by any means an uncommon experience to Mr. and Mrs. Buffard. In his first newsletter following his return to the field he wrote, " We have had trials of our faith. Funds were not sent in to Mr. Thompson (who had succeeded

Pastor Smale as Secretary and Treasurer) as readily as we anticipated, and were not nearly enough to meet our expenses. For several weeks we were living just from day to day, not knowing where our next day's meals were coming from. But they always came, and we never went short, though we had to live mainly on vegetables and rice. I have not space to tell how marvellously the Lord supplied our need from day to day, in most unexpected ways. I am glad to say that our new helpers stood the test well, and have kept happy and cheerful through it all." Their testimony would doubtless have been that, inspired by the example of the missionary and his wife, they were enabled to accept without fretfulness this early experience of enduring hardness for the sake of Christ.

But further trials awaited them. Persecution in Valdepenas was increasing. Recent political changes had been favourable to the priests, who were not slow to take advantage of the situation. Mr. Buffard received notice to give up the Hall, and the possibility of gaining another was extremely remote. Senor Vacas was ordered to vacate his house, and, thinking to turn the whole populace against the missionary and his workers, the priests engaged a special preacher from Madrid to denounce them. After charging them with every kind of misdemeanour, he declared that they were turning Ciudad Real and the adjoining province upside down—not the first time the enemies of Christ have paid His servants this unintentional compliment !

In spite of these denunciations the work went on. Meetings were held in private houses, often with as many as eighty people present, and souls were born again. When two fanatical Romanists were converted, the priest, in desperation, went to the limit of absurdity, commanding all who had Protestant books in their possession to burn them and then to wash their hands in strong disinfectant.

CHAPTER 8

THE FAME OF DON PERCY

" SEND for Don Percy ! "

When that cry was uttered, no one asked, " Which Don Percy ? " There was only one. Unlike many English names, " Percy " has no equivalent in the Spanish language, so, being untranslatable, the name, like the man who bore it, was unique.

It held a world of meaning for those whom he had led from the tyranny of Rome into the life and liberty that are in Christ, and by such it was spoken with real affection.

But it had gained a new significance that was becoming increasingly recognized by the people of Valdepenas in general. " Send for Don Percy ! " was often the cry of distressed relatives when the doctor in attendance pronounced a case of sickness as hopeless. The fame he acquired came all unsought, emerging in the first place from his normal pastoral duties.

Soon after his removal to Valdepenas he visited the home of a convert whose son was desperately ill with pneumonia. His life was despaired of, but the missionary applied his elementary knowledge and committed the case to the Lord. Under His blessing the lad recovered, to the astonishment of his doctor, who declared that it was nothing short of a miracle. Inevitably, the news spread, and Don Percy was called to the bedside of another boy in the same condition. The treatment produced identical results, but more wonderful than physical recovery was the fact that both lads yielded their spared lives to the Lord.

A new instrument for the furtherance of the Gospel had been placed in Don Percy's hands, and he had no option but to use it. Before long his aid was sought for a man suffering from alcoholic liver. Although attended by three doctors, he was steadily growing worse, but again the missionary put his limited knowledge of medicine into practice. It proved successful, and another soul was won for Christ.

IN THE EARLY DAYS (about 1923)

Mr. and Mrs. Buffard with a group of English and Spanish workers

Back Row (from the left): Sr. Aguilera, Agustin's wife, Sr. Agustin, Mr. Hulbert, Miss Dadd, Sr. Andrés, Miss Stedman, Don Francisco (ex-priest), wife of Andrés, Sr. Villar

Middle Row: Mr. Buffard, Mrs. Buffard, wife of Sr. Vacas, wife of Sr. Villar, wife of Sr. Aguilera, wife of Don Francisco, wife of Sr. Avellaneda

Front Row: Sr. Vacas, Sr. Avellaneda, Señorita Irene Perez, Miss Brown, Mrs. Hulbert

Before long Don Percy was being credited with skill to cure all ills. People with a variety of ailments were coming to him for treatment—and benefiting, and none went away without hearing of the Great Physician. Many of them, because of prejudice, or suspicion, or fear, would not otherwise have been drawn to the Mission.

There was the daughter of the first male convert in Valdepenas who had vehemently persecuted her father because he had joined the hated heretics. Then illness overtook her and none of the doctors in the town was able to effect a cure. When, in despair, she was driven as a last resort to present her case to Don Percy, he received her kindly, prescribed treatment, and eventually she was healed. With a new conception of those she had maligned, she began to attend the meetings and later yielded her life to Christ. After two years of consistent witness she made public confession of her faith by baptism.

The number of people seeking medical aid steadily increased until it became clear that a clinic, with specified hours of attendance, was an absolute necessity if the purely spiritual work were not to be seriously disrupted. Miss C. M. Gardner, who had joined the Mission in 1919, had a knowledge of pharmacy. She was the Lord's gift in advance for this unforeseen development, assisting the missionary as his dispenser.

But as the medical work continued to grow, and to make ever greater demands upon him, Don Percy felt the need to be more adequately equipped for a ministry so full of potentiality for the Kingdom of God. Accordingly, in 1921, he and his wife spent six months in England, during which time he took a course at the Homoeopathic Hospital in London, where, by the kindness of the hospital staff and the Secretary of the Missionary School of Medicine, he gained much valuable knowledge. In a subsequent field report he wrote, " Our fame is spreading far and wide, and we are obliged to limit our treatment to those who have failed to get any relief from the doctors, otherwise we should never be able to cope with the numbers who want to come. As it is, we have 175 patients on our books. One or two of these have been given up by the doctors to die, and the Lord has used us to restore them to health and strength.

Best of all, some seven or eight have already accepted Christ as their Saviour, and very many have become interested in the meetings."

Meanwhile a further token that the medical work was of the Lord was granted in the arrival of Miss A. Brown, a nurse who had answered God's call after listening to Don Percy's earnest pleading for workers during a deputation tour. She was able to save much of his time, especially as she took charge of the visiting cases, with Mrs. Buffard as interpreter while she was acquiring the language.

As was to be expected, the success achieved was not allowed to pass unchallenged by the accredited practitioners of the medical profession. Roused by facts that could not be gainsaid, they sought to defend their reputation by indicting the missionaries, who as a result had to give up treating the sick in their homes, although all other unqualified persons doing the same thing were tolerated. A qualified doctor on the Mission staff would have been an answer to the situation.

Although the visiting was no longer possible, people continued to come in large numbers for treatment, and from places up to seventy miles away, many being thus opened to the Gospel. During one year 800 patients were treated, some with such remarkable success and spiritual consequences that Don Percy was constrained to recount a number for the encouragement of those at home who were supporting him by prayer and gift.

"A man who has been for treatment and who is now quite well, was converted a few weeks ago and is attending regularly. A woman came in great distress about her boy aged ten years who had had fever for three days. We gave the medicine and the boy was quite well in a few days. Since then all four children have attended the Sunday school, and father and mother have attended the evening meetings. Another mother brought her baby of two years to me after the service one Sunday morning. The little one looked half dead and very thin and cold. After giving directions for feeding and a bottle of medicine, the mother went away quite happy. The next week everybody in the market knew that the baby who was nearly dead was well again, and that the 'Protestantes' had cured it. The

woman was very grateful and now attends the meetings, while the father, who came into the meetings half drunk, is now converted and going on well. The wife testifies to the changed life in the home. We praise the Lord for another soul saved. We have had many cases of whooping cough, all of which have been cured, generally with one bottle of medicine."

Then, suddenly, the blow fell. A doctor took legal action, and Don Percy was called before the judge, who ordered him to close the clinic. But patients were soon demanding to know why there were no days for consultation, and Don Percy's fame was published the more. Nevertheless, the affair held sinister implications. For the first time there was open opposition on the part of the authorities, who, besides closing the clinic, prohibited the holding of cottage meetings, and imprisoned two members of the Mission fellowship for alleged offences against the Roman Catholic Church.

With the impossibility of doing medical work in Valdepenas, it was continued for a time in surrounding villages, but eventually, through Miss Vessey, a trained nurse, the clinic was re-opened as an Infant Welfare Centre, where the ministry among mothers and babies was richly blessed, many of the women who there heard the Gospel for the first time being truly converted.

Chapter 9

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

IN the meantime, Mr. Buffard's responsibilities had increased very considerably. Three new missionaries—two ladies and a young man—had arrived from England, and the band of Spanish workers consisted of five evangelists, two colporteurs and a Biblewoman. For their support and that of himself and his family, the Director looked to the Lord, and the whole enterprise was carried on in faith. Mr. Buffard could never count upon a regular and adequate flow of funds from the homeland, and very often he faced financial problems that drove him to his knees. But he turned every difficulty to spiritual profit, and he was able to testify, " Even the shortage of funds has proved a blessing, and drawn us closer to the Lord. It has also increased our faith as we have seen the marvellous way in which our need has been supplied from most unexpected sources when the usual supplies have failed. Oftentimes we do not know where our next meal is coming from, but it always comes. We have proved over and over again that the Lord does hear and answer prayer."

He was only really troubled when lack of funds caused curtailment of the work, but he was able to recount numerous occasions when, having decided in faith upon some venture, the money came to hand just in time.

Once he had it laid upon his heart to send an evangelist to a town two days' journey away, but from the Treasurer had come the news that he had no money in hand and would write again in a week or so. Just then the cash-box contained sufficient for the evangelist's fare and about half-a-crown over. Mr. Buffard called the workers together and explained the situation. Then he asked, " Do you think we can live for a week or more on half-a-crown ? "

Faith rose to the occasion, and they said they thought they could, so it was settled that the evangelist should go. The next day, just as the missionary was paying over to him practically all the money he had, the postman arrived

with a cheque for £50. As it was such a large amount, the Treasurer had sent it off immediately, although neither he nor the donor knew anything of the straitened circumstances it was destined to relieve.

Mr. and Mrs. Buffard always wanted to be independent of Mission funds, and they rejoiced when they were able, by strict economy, to subsist on gifts specially donated for their personal use. But even when they were not a charge upon the slender resources, the end of the month often found them with insufficient money to pay workers in full. For the Spanish evangelists, £90 was regarded as the minimum wage upon which they and their families could live decently, but seldom did they at that time receive as much.

These were the circumstances in which loyalty to the faith principle, upon which the Mission was founded, was most severely tested. The Southern Baptist Convention of the United States, who were beginning to take an interest in the evangelization of Spain, sent two representatives to investigate conditions and prepare a report. Mr. Buffard met them in Madrid, and, rejoicing in the prospect of reinforcements, he assured them that he would warmly welcome all whom they might send. Having behind them resources that were capable of bearing almost any strain, Dr. Gambrell and Dr. Mullins made the staggering suggestion that the Spanish Gospel Mission should throw in its lot with them and thus be relieved of all financial problems.

Just how attractive, on the human level, such an offer would be, can well be imagined. But while its implications were clear to Mr. Buffard, he would not give a decisive answer without consulting his colleagues. The majority were with him in deciding against it in view of its violation of the faith principle and the changes in method involved, and although the majority decision to decline the offer resulted in the loss of three missionaries to the American organization, Mr. Buffard was happy in the thought that they would remain in Spain. One of them later returned to the Mission.

As the Spanish workers were included in the invitation, Mr. Buffard called them together also, and placed the offer before them, giving them complete liberty to leave the Mission if they wished to do so, and informing them that

their remuneration would be sure, and probably double, what they were then receiving. Let him describe the reactions of these men who were the spearhead of the work.

" With one accord they refused to hear of it, and tried to out-do one another in their manifestations of love and loyalty to me and the Mission, and I was greatly comforted. When one thinks of the hard times we have passed through, their loyalty is the more touching, and we thank God for giving us such devoted helpers. I learned since that one of them had received an offer from his old trade of more than three times the remuneration he is getting with us."

The Mission had weathered a crisis of the first order. Now, with a body of workers united in heart as never before, it was fortified to meet new responsibilities and trials.

The Pioneer Mission were wishing to enter Spain, but having no one to send they approached Mr. Buffard, requesting him to commence and superintend work in the Province of Badajoz on their behalf. He gladly agreed, adding another province to the five in which the Mission was already working, and appointing Senor Vacas to visit it as often as possible.

But this widening of the Mission's frontiers did not escape the notice of the enemies of the Gospel, and the full weight of their fury fell upon the evangelist on one of his visits to the fanatical town of Santa Marta. At the instigation of the priests he was seized at midnight, dragged from his room, and brutally maltreated by eight policemen, who then ordered him to proceed to the next town some ten miles away. Bruised and bleeding, he staggered on through the night, singing praises to God that he was counted worthy to suffer for the sake of the Name.

After gaining from him the details of the outrage, the Madrid Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society wrote in the *España Evangelica*, a weekly religious paper, " It is not an exaggeration nor an excess of sentimentalism to say that it was true martyrdom, even though it did not end in death."

From sadism the priests turned to absurdity, producing a tract having twenty-five clauses, each of which was a prayer to the animal or object particularly associated with the saint named. Its " holy " object, it was stated, was

" that the devout women may pray it for the conversion of the wicked, the spiritual profit of their own souls, and the extermination of the heretics ". " Horse of St. James, trample on them; Bull of St. Lucas, gore them; Rook of St. Onofre, pick out their eyes; Dragon of St. George, kill them " are examples of the ridiculous prayers.

With the keen sense of humour which never deserted him, Mr. Buffard commented, " It does not say whether we are to suffer all this at once; anyway, we are still here."

Then, in more serious strain, " Small wonder that we are persecuted when so-called Christian leaders of the people teach them to pray such prayers against us."

After two years the American Society renewed their offer. But although funds had been so low that for eighteen months the evangelists had not received full allowances, and all had been living more or less from hand to mouth, they decided unanimously to adhere to their earlier decision. The privations took their toll of Mr. Buffard's strength, and often he had to admit that ill-health kept him in Valdepenas when he was longing to visit the towns and villages of his wide field.

One summer, due to malnutrition and exhaustion induced by exceptional heat, he was laid very low, and to this trial was added the anxiety he shared with Mrs. Buffard concerning their baby girl, who was also seriously ill. In the Lord's gracious providence both were spared, but in Mr. Buffard's case, strength returned very slowly.

Chapter 10

A MISSIONARY STATESMAN

STATESMANSHIP is an indispensable faculty in one who bears the responsibility of framing missionary policy. It combines the power to perceive trends as they become evident, to foresee the direction in which they are likely to develop, and to plan strategy with a view to counteracting or pursuing them according to whether they are adverse or favourable to the cause.

Mr. Buffard possessed this quality in no small measure. His assessments of the various political crises through which Spain passed during his missionary experience, which he committed to the Mission's magazine, are masterpieces of clear thinking and spiritual insight, to which subsequent history bore testimony. These gifts, and his sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, constituted him a missionary statesman *par excellence*, enabling him to guide the work on the field through days of prosperity and adversity with courage and wisdom.

His strategy was planned in the light of certain convictions. He recognized the absolute necessity of maintaining close liaison between the field and the homeland, and as for a considerable number of years the only representative in England was an Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, he took upon himself the additional office of Deputation Speaker, spending some time each year telling of Spain's need of the Gospel at meetings in all parts of the British Isles.

During his absence from the field in 1923 he was able to attend the Baptist Convention held that year in Stockholm, where he was given an opportunity to speak on his work. On the Sunday afternoon of the return voyage to England, he was permitted to hold a meeting for Spain in the after smoke room of S.S. *Marloch*, which had served as hotel for delegates attending the Convention. Writing about it afterwards he said, "The smoke room was packed and many had to go away as there was not even standing room.

Mr. Buffard (*fifth from the left, middle row*) **and a group of missionaries and Spanish friends, about 1925**

I had a very good time and many were deeply interested. As there were about 150 ministers on board, I had plenty of opportunities for booking meetings."

In addition to a full diary, he brought back money for the Mission. On the previous Friday evening he had come across a group of ladies who were examining with evident dissatisfaction the presents they had bought in Sweden. He asked if they would like to see some Spanish lace. They hailed the suggestion with enthusiasm, and that evening and the following morning he sold all he had taken with him, making a profit of about £12.

To fulfil all the engagements he had booked, Mr. Buffard had to prolong his stay in England for several months. During that time an Advisory Council was formed to strengthen the work at the home end and set the Director free to devote more time to the field.

He went back to face difficulties and disappointments. The Military Directorate, which had commenced in September of the previous year, had purged the country of much political and civic immorality, but it was becoming increasingly clerical, a trend which inevitably carried the corollary of hatred of Protestant influence. In an outburst of persecution, many believers were fined and imprisoned, and such was the antagonism to Protestants that the British Ambassador in Madrid affirmed that he could not give official protection from consequences of provocative behaviour, if such there should be. So real was the hostility that it was deemed advisable to suspend a number of Mission activities for the time being.

Another of Mr. Buffard's firmly held convictions was that only by the practice of prayer and the study of the Word could Spanish converts become strong, witnessing Christians. While this is of universal application, it was particularly true of the peasants of Central Spain among whom he worked, and from whom the Bible had been withheld by a corrupt Church that made capital out of their ignorance. For their " instruction in righteousness " the missionary instituted Bible classes and small conventions. But the initial effort on a larger scale was the first " Keswick " Convention ever to be held in Spain, when, in 1921, Rev. Charles Inwood visited Valdepenas

under the auspices of the Keswick Council. It lasted eight days, and of the culminating meeting Mr. Inwood wrote, " The last Sunday was the crowning day. At the night service we knew of five men and women who definitely accepted Christ as their Saviour. Four-fifths stood to thank God for what He had done for them in the Convention, and as we commended them all to the Lord as their Keeper, once more a mystic wave of grace and power broke over us. Then by a standing vote a resolution of thanks was passed to Keswick for sending me, and with this was coupled a pathetic plea that we who are more highly favoured may remember them and their unhappy country in our prayers. So ended one of the most gracious conventions I have ever been permitted to hold; one which from first to last was under the strong and tightening grip of the Spirit of God."

Four years later he paid a return visit to Spain, this time holding a three-day convention at Valdepenas, and another at Puertollano, where the Mission had work that was financed by the Glyn Vivian Miners' Mission (as it was then known). Here the series of meetings began with the opening and dedication of the new Hall, the first Protestant place of worship ever built in Puertollano. It had aroused fierce opposition. The life of Senor Villar, the evangelist, had been threatened, and it was rumoured that the Hall would be burned down before it was opened, but there were no untoward incidents. Threats and boasts only served to advertise the event, and in the meetings which followed, men and women were converted or entered into deeper spiritual experience.

Mr. Buffard's standing as a missionary statesman gained notable recognition in 1929 when he was invited to speak on " The Growth and Activities of the Church " at a congress in Barcelona of all Evangelicals in Spain. Telling of the experience he said, " After considerable hesitation I accepted and gave the address. I felt led to point out that during the last twenty-five years there had been no growth in the Church in Spain, rather the reverse, and that there was very little evangelistic activity, taking the work as a whole. I also stated that the obvious inference that, following the same methods and inertia, things would be no better in

fifty years from now. Then I proceeded to indicate some rather revolutionary proposals for stimulating the growth of the Church, somewhat on the lines suggested by Roland Allen in his books, and proposed that a conference of all evangelical workers be called to discuss what could be done.

" I feared that my message would meet with a rather hostile reception, but in the discussion that followed, practically all agreed with my diagnosis of the situation and unanimously decided to call together a conference of workers. The Spanish Evangelical Alliance was asked to undertake this, and the conference was called for June 11 to 14 (1930), the first interdenominational conference of workers ever held in Spain.

" It was time well spent. The great majority of the workers were impressed with the need for more definite evangelistic work and for the establishment of indigenous self-supporting, self-administrating, and self-propagating churches. One worker who was present wrote me shortly afterwards saying that as a result of the conference he was more determined than ever to do all he could to take the Gospel to the thousands of towns and villages where Christ was still unknown."

Convinced from the earliest days that the most effective way of reaching the people of Spain with the Gospel was through nationals, Mr. Buffard gradually built up a body of Spanish workers. Having in view the establishment of an indigenous Church, he foresaw the need for trained leadership, and it was part of his missionary strategy to give these men some Bible training.

The short time spent in teaching at the language school in Santander was significant for the opportunity it afforded to develop a natural gift, which in time was recognized beyond the borders of the Mission. Twice he was an extra-mural lecturer at the Evangelical Baptist Seminary of Barcelona, thus helping to prepare candidates for the ministry. After the first of these tutorial commissions he was asked to act as interpreter at the Baptist Congress held in Barcelona in 1926.

Among his own projects were short term Bible courses in which young men learned how to witness for Christ in their daily occupations. His supreme desire was for a

Bible School for the training of evangelists, and for years he prayed that he might receive the necessary funds. But the Lord had another plan which was unexpectedly revealed.

Hearing that Rev. Oswald Smith was in Europe representing the World Wide Christian Couriers of America, and holding special conventions for the deepening of spiritual life, Mr. Buffard invited him to visit Valdepenas. He came, and after holding a three-day convention, made a tour of the Mission centres. Eventually he returned to America, and hearing from him of Spain's deep spiritual need, the Couriers undertook to finance a Bible School in Valdepenas. It was founded in 1930, and the Director of the Mission, and the Dean of the Bible School, Mr. R. David Sholin, laboured together in a close and harmonious relationship.

Expressing his appreciation at the close of the first year, Mr. Buffard said, " The extraordinary progress of the lads, intellectually and spiritually, is due, under God, in very large measure, to the self-sacrificing labours of Mr. Sholin, and we cannot sufficiently express our gratitude to him for all his ready help, not only in his own particular sphere, but wherever he can lend a hand. I praise God for such a colleague."

He pronounced the Bible School as " The most promising branch of the work for the future ", and " The biggest effort yet put forward for taking the Gospel to unevangelized districts of Spain ".

CHAPTER 11

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

FOR some time there had been an undercurrent of unrest in Spain of which Mr. Buffard, with his acute perspicacity, was well aware.

" The political situation calls for prayer," he told friends at home in his " Notes and Comments " for the magazine of July 1930. " Change is in the air and the anti-clerical feeling has become strong. In Almansa and Alicante, Roman Catholic processions have been broken up by the mob. We deplore such acts as these, but the tyranny of the priests is really responsible. It is possible, though not very probable, that before you read these lines we may have a republic, but it is rash to prophesy."

In November he wrote, " The political situation in Spain is still very uncertain, and anything may happen in the next few months . . . or nothing. In any case, things are decidedly easier for Evangelicals, and there is not quite so much persecution as formerly, while the censorship has been abolished."

These things were straws upon the stream, indicating the direction in which the tide of political opinion was flowing, and on April 14th, 1931, Spain was declared a Republic. The supreme significance for Protestant Missions, and indeed for the people of Spain as a whole, was that it brought religious liberty. This issue had been in the forefront of Anti-Monarchical parties for some years, and there was general rejoicing when the Republic was declared.

In the next number of the magazine, which by this time had acquired the title, *Tidings from Spain*, Mr. Buffard devoted considerable space to this epoch-making event, which happily was unmarred by the shedding of blood. His record of the occasion is worth quoting in full.

" At the first Cabinet meeting of the new Government the promise was given of liberty of worship, the secularization of cemeteries, and the restitution to the clergy of their full civil rights. On Saturday, May 23rd, a decree was

published conceding the first point, and stating among other things that every religion will enjoy equal rights and privileges. Although the publishing of the actual decree was delayed, it had been taken for granted from the very first. On the night the Republic was declared, a special meeting was to have taken place in our Hall at Valdepenas, but it was turned into a praise meeting. Three of our students, returning from the meeting, were greeted with enthusiasm by the crowd in the street and urged to speak. They were not slow to take advantage of the opportunity, and there and then organized an open-air meeting in the main street of our town, probably the first open-air meeting to be held in Spain under the new régime.

" On the Sunday following, a civic procession took place to commemorate the declaration of the Republic, and Senor Aguilera, as representing the Evangelicals, was invited by the Mayor to walk with him and the other officials at the head of the procession as a sign of their sympathy, while the students followed behind with a large banner on which was written ' Long Live Liberty of Conscience ' on one side, and ' Long Live Free Spain ' on the other, while the crowd, instead of shouting the usual cry of ' Down with the Protestants ', cried out repeatedly, ' Long live the Protestants '.

" On April 30th, Senor Aguilera was asked to give an address at the Labourers' Hall, when he had the opportunity of preaching the Gospel to perhaps 800 men. Everywhere doors are open for the Gospel; towns where we have been prohibited from holding meetings are now crying out for them, and in some of these we have already held large open-air meetings. While, however, official persecution has ceased, private persecution is still strong, and will probably be so for years to come. Great pressure is frequently brought to bear upon the Christians and those who attend our meetings to prevent them from coming. This persecution is so underhand that it is impossible to get legal redress.

" By the time you read this the election of June 28th will have taken place. It is rash to prophesy, for Spain is a land of surprises both politically and otherwise, but I think it is almost certain that the Republic will be consolidated,

although doubtless there are troublous times ahead. The present fusion of Anti-Monarchical elements is largely artificial, and will almost certainly break up when the Republic is an established fact. One thing, however, we are thankful for, and that is, that there is little prospect in this generation of Communism obtaining power, though their influence is somewhat on the increase. It was Communism in league with the Monarchists that was responsible for the riots in May, and the deplorable attacks on Church property. Spain needs your special prayers just now."

As these comments indicate, Mr. Buffard's jubilation was tempered with caution born of experience, and subsequent events proved how exact and penetrating was his prophetic instinct. As he had forecast, the elections ratified the people's decision. As for Communism, only twenty-two candidates in the whole of Spain were presented, and not all of these were elected. On the matter of troublous times to come, he had also spoken truly. " Although the Republic is now on its feet," he wrote in September of the same year, " quarrels have already begun and are likely to increase." They did, and not in Parliament only, and before long Spain was on the brink of civil war, which, happily, was averted.

The first year of liberty brought real advance for the Mission. Hundreds of open-air meetings were held in theatres, casinos, bullrings and public squares, the attendances in a few cases running into thousands. In the churches great blessing was experienced. Secret believers gained courage to make open confession of their faith in Christ, seventy-five were baptized and received into church fellowship, and a large number professed conversion.

Mr. Buffard's aim to see the churches becoming self-supporting was further by the new conditions, and by 1934 there were sixteen churches that were no charge at all upon Mission funds, except for expenses connected with an occasional visit by an evangelist. Altogether there were Halls and rooms licensed for public worship in thirty-three towns and villages, several of the Halls having been built, partially or entirely, at the expense of Spanish Christians, although most were living in almost inconceivable poverty.

In March 1934 one of the most important meetings in the history of the Spanish Gospel Mission was held in Valdepenas, when the Federation of Evangelical Autonomous Churches was formed.

Explaining this development to readers of the magazine, Mr. Buffard said, " For years we had been training our churches to be self-supporting, self-administrating, and self-propagating, so that it was a comparatively easy matter for us to make the transition from a Mission to a Federation in order to comply with the laws of the Republic, which require all officers and administrators to be Spanish.

" This, however, involved a difference of relationship between the Spanish workers and the Spanish Gospel Mission. No longer were they legally workers of the Mission, but they became workers of the Federation. Our Mission thus ceases to be a Mission as regards the Spanish workers and has become what one might call a Spanish Church Aid Society, in addition to undertaking the support of such British workers as may be deemed advisable. Both Mr. Sholin and myself have been asked to act as honorary councillors of the Federation, but we are no longer Directors."

Although not realized until later, this step, demanded by law, was an amazing instance of the Lord's provision, through legislation, for a time when such an arrangement would be all-important.

It might be said that the whole pattern of the work was changing, for in that same article Mr. Buffard gave the intimation that " Our Council feel very strongly that I ought to spend more time in England on deputation work, so we are thinking of forming a Field Committee of British workers to share the responsibility of the British work in Spain."

Chapter 12

"I'M PRAYING FOR A YOUNG MAN"

SOME five years had passed since the Saturday evening when Mr. Buffard addressed the prayer meeting at a South London church, and, quite unknown to him, a schoolboy had gone home to kneel at his bedside and vow, "Lord, if there is no one to send, I will go." But on leaving school he recognized that filial duty to his widowed mother must detain him for a time, and he accepted a business post in which he remained for seven years.

Then Mr. Buffard preached again at the church, which the family had continued to attend, and as he again pleaded for workers for his beloved Spain, he cried, "I'm praying for a young man."

The schoolboy had reached young manhood, and Mr. E. Stuart Brown knew, beyond all possibility of a peradventure, that the Lord had now taken him at his word, that He had called him to Spain, and that there must be instant obedience. After the service he sought an interview with Mr. Buffard, and offered himself for missionary work with the Spanish Gospel Mission.

For Mr. Brown the next step was training. He applied to Spurgeon's College, was accepted, and after completing his course in the summer of 1931, he joined Mr. Buffard at Valdepenas at the beginning of 1932, nine months after religious liberty had been declared. He made remarkable progress with the language, and towards the end of the year he spent two months at Madrid University for special language study.

Mr. Brown's call to Spain was shared by Miss Doris Giles, his fiancée, who after taking the two-year course at Mount Hermon Missionary Training College, arrived at Valdepenas in September of the same year. In March 1933 they were married. Their linguistic attainments, and the energy with which they threw themselves into the work, delighted Mr. Buffard, who, when reviewing the year 1933

remarked, "Mr. and Mrs. Brown have made wonderful progress with the language and are already almost indispensable. Mr. Brown has accepted the position of Field Treasurer, and this will relieve me of considerable work."

God's timing of events in the lives of His children is part of the romance of Christian experience. In the period immediately preceding the arrival of Mr. Brown, the missionary body was composed entirely of ladies, and an unsuspected situation, demanding the presence of another man on the field, was about to develop. When the emergency arose, Mr. and Mrs. Brown were there, and had become sufficiently fluent in the language to take oversight.

The first phase of the emergency was Mrs. Buffard's breakdown in health following an attack of influenza. It was imperative to get her away for a change, and Mr. Buffard, himself far from well, took her first to Switzerland, and then to England for treatment. At that time of stress and anxiety it was a great consolation to him that he was leaving the affairs of the Mission in capable hands. When some months later he returned to Spain, his wife was still too ill to accompany him, and until the summer of the next year he was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Brown, whom he had invited to live in his house. Then, with ill-health increasing, he went back to England for a medical examination. Appendicitis was diagnosed and an operation performed which, although successful, left him weak for some considerable time. Towards the end of 1934 Mr. and Mrs. Buffard returned together to Spain, Mr. and Mrs. Brown again acting as host and hostess for the duration of their convalescence.

In 1935 Mr. Brown accepted the office of Field Secretary, and in that capacity was able to take a large share of the burden of administration.

"I'm praying for a young man," Mr. Buffard had said. The prayer and the answer were equally of the Lord, Who years before had planted in the heart of a lad a concern for the multitudes of Spain who had no one to tell them of the Saviour, and Who, when His time had come, sent His servant back that the early impulse might be ratified in a definite call to the sphere of His appointment.

Chapter 13

ANXIOUS DAYS

AFTER the overthrow of the Monarchy in 1931, there was almost complete religious liberty, but the General Election held in November 1933 resulted in the Roman Catholic party gaining a great victory. Among outstanding reasons, as Mr. Buffard saw the situation, were general disappointment that Spain had not become a Paradise under the new form of Government; the large number of unemployed who became an easy prey to political agitators, and increased taxation which led to much discontent among the middle and upper classes. The vote given to all women was another large factor. In the country districts the priests still had considerable influence over the women, and in order to throw the whole weight of the Roman Church into the scale against the Socialists and Republicans, even cloistered nuns who had never been outside their convent, were taken to the polling booths by special permission of the highest ecclesiastical authorities. It was estimated that about twenty-five thousand extra votes were thus gained for the clerical party. Knowing, however, that it had not the support of the country as a whole, it had to declare itself Republican.

" The enemy of Evangelical Christianity in this country in the future," Mr. Buffard affirmed, " will not be Roman Catholicism, but its deadly fruit, Atheism. Atheism, and an anti-religious spirit, is spreading at an alarming rate all over Spain."

With fermenting unrest throughout the country, a revolution broke out within a year, with fighting in many places. No Evangelicals were hurt, but at Gijón the revolutionaries threatened to burn the Gospel Hall, a catastrophe that was averted by offering it for use as a field hospital.

Spain passed through a time of extreme anxiety, and when the revolution was quelled, the country remained under martial law for some time, which created great

difficulties for the Mission, since it was impossible to hold cottage meetings or public meetings outside the church.

The year 1935 was a trying one for Mr. Buffard. For a considerable period he was very unwell, and Mrs. Buffard was also in poor health. But it also held some new experiences.

During the early months a change was affected in the status of the Bible School. Rev. Oswald Smith, who had been instrumental in gaining the American funds by which it was founded and maintained, and its students helped financially, suggested that in view of the success achieved, the time had come for it to launch out and become independent, continuing without official connection with any Mission or denomination in order to serve all. The suggestion was adopted, and in March it re-opened in Granada, with Mr. Sholin as Principal.

Mr. Buffard's comments on this new development were, " Mr. Sholin and I have had the closest co-operation in the past and have greatly enjoyed fellowship one with the other. I am glad to say there will not be the slightest interruption of this fellowship and co-operation. I shall continue to help as before, and, if finance allows, we shall be glad to send some students from here to enjoy the benefit of the course, so that they may serve the churches better in their spare time. I expect to spend a good deal of time there to help Mr. Sholin in the work of teaching."

That year the matter of the government of the country again hung in the balance, and in the early months, with another General Election looming just ahead, Mr. Buffard surveyed the situation and the prospects. " Since the remarkable swing-over to the Right (Clerical) in November 1933, there has been a strong reaction in the country, so that the clerical government has not dared to ignore the Constitution openly, and, on the whole, the liberties granted to us by the Constitution have been respected.

" Taking advantage of the fact that the majority of the Government were in favour of the Church of Rome, the local authorities in many places have tried to hinder our work. In every case, however, we have been upheld in our Constitutional rights when we appealed to the higher authorities. What the future is to hold we cannot tell. A

General Election is to be held on February 16th, and there is little doubt that if there were fair play, the anti-clerical party would gain an easy victory. As it is, owing to the machinations of those in power, the issue is doubtful. If the anti-clerical parties win, the Evangelicals will be respected and their liberties conserved; if the clerical parties win, I fear it will be a bad look-out for Evangelical Christianity. Whatever the issue, there are troublous times ahead, and Spain badly needs prayer help."

To the great relief of all Evangelicals in Spain, the Republican party gained a sweeping majority over the combined forces of the Centre and Clerical parties, and religious liberty was again assured.

By the summer of 1935 Mr. Buffard's health had improved, and he took part in the ministry at the annaul conference of the Beatenberg Bible School in Switzerland.

A matter that had been receiving the attention of the Council for some years was brought to a head by the breakdown in health of the Organizing Secretary, Rev. G. J. Attwood, who asked to be relieved of work in that connection, while continuing to act as Secretary to the Council.

Members of the Council had felt for a considerable time that more deputation work was needed to sustain existing prayer support and arouse fresh interest. As the Mission had no Deputation Secretary, Mr. Buffard had been spending a few months in England each year, holding meetings and taking part in the autumn rallies. Now the Council suggested that perhaps the time had come for him to settle in England, and devote the whole of his time to deputation work, leaving Mr. Brown to administer the work in Spain as Field Secretary. He did not then feel free to act on their suggestion, but for that year he compromised by spending a longer time than usual in the homeland to present the needs of the work.

By the end of the year he was back in Spain, as alert as ever in assessing the political situation and its effect upon Protestant missionary enterprise, and to find that his prophecy with regard to " troublous times ahead " had been only too true. Lawlessness was abroad, and there were instances of mobs getting out of hand and burning churches and convents, although there was fairly certain

proof that some of these buildings had been burned by the inmates themselves, partly in order to get the insurance, and partly to discredit the Government. It also seemed clear that in most cases the mobs were incited by provocative agents employed by the Clerical parties.

The greatest surprise was the election of the Prime Minister, Senor Azaña, to the Presidency. Universally respected, his retirement to that office caused widespread dismay. But expressing his view of the matter Mr. Buffard said, " I am tempted to think that Senor Azaña will exercise control over Parliament behind the scenes in as constitutional a way as possible. This may prove to be the best solution of a very difficult situation."

Chapter 14

CIVIL WAR!

ALTHOUGH Spain was still in a state of political upheaval, after application had been made to the Mayor, cottage meetings in Valdepenas were re-started early in 1936, and the crowded gatherings, indicative of increased interest in the Gospel, were a source of tremendous encouragement to the Director and his workers.

In April Mr. Buffard organized an important interdenominational convention which was held in the Escorial, near Madrid, with Miss Ruth Paxson, who had held meetings in Valdepenas in 1934, and her companion, Miss Edith Davies, as the chief speakers. Mr. Buffard himself made a very valuable contribution to the convention, acting as interpreter to the visiting speakers, and delivering devotional addresses of deep spiritual value.

The timing of this event was evidently of the Lord, for only three months later Spain was riven by the outbreak of Civil War. The blessing experienced during the convention was for some a preparation for martyrdom when evil passions were unleashed.

When this terrible calamity befell the country, Mr. Buffard was back in England, but his innate clear-sightedness enabled him to see that the issue was not between Communism and Fascism, but between clericalism and anti-clericalism. The immorality, greed and hypocrisy of the priests had turned the majority of Spaniards against the only form of religion they knew, and, freed from the fear of persecution when the Republic of 1931 gave equal privileges to all religions, the people as a whole had abandoned the Roman Church. Now the Fascist rebels, with Franco as their chosen leader, were fighting to restore it to power.

As the fighting spread to new areas, the British Consul strongly advised all British subjects to leave the country immediately, and all the lady missionaries were safely evacuated. But as all was quiet in and around Valdepenas,

Mr. and Mrs. Brown decided to stay on for the present, even hoping that there would ultimately be no need for them to leave. All meetings in the church had to be suspended, but a few were held in a small hall on Mission premises. In case he should be compelled to flee the country, Mr. Brown made arrangements for Mission funds to be transferred to Senor Aguilera's bank account, and he was made responsible for paying the Spanish workers then and when arrangements should be made to remit money from England during the emergency.

Then, as the war gained in momentum, and no work was possible that could not be carried on by nationals, Mr. and Mrs. Brown saw that the wisest course for them was to come home, knowing that there would be an unparalleled opportunity for deputation work in England, and expecting that within a few months the revolution would be quelled and they could return.

In course of time some of the older missionaries retired, some took temporary jobs, while Mr. Brown, after fifteen months of intensive deputation work, was led to accept a temporary pastorate. Mr. Buffard was as busy as ever, with a full programme of deputation meetings, keeping interest in the Mission alive, and making known its continued need of prayer and of funds to support the national workers and help Spanish Christians experiencing adversity.

During 1938, which marked the Silver Jubilee of the Mission, Mr. Buffard was widely engaged in convention ministry in several countries, using these opportunities to seek prayer that tortured Spain might soon know peace, that the work of evangelism might go on unhindered.

In the spring of 1939 the Civil War came to an end, with Franco in power. Mr. Buffard's first thought was to visit Spain to see conditions for himself, and having gained permits for thirty days' residence, he and Mr. Brown spent July in Valdepenas, finding to their great joy that it had known nothing of actual fighting. As far as was possible the work had been carried on, but the hall was now closed by military orders, and so far permission to reopen it had not been granted. The churches had suffered some losses through death, two evangelists and a number of their members were in prison, others were in concentration

camps. But it was reassuring to hear of Christians who had stood firm in the face of severe persecution.

For Mr. Buffard the question as to whether he should permanently reside in England was settled, first by the incidence of the Civil War, and then, a few months after its conclusion, by the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1940 he was able to pay another short visit to Spain, but with the widening of the area of hostilities, and his own poor health, nine years were to pass before he again saw the land he had taken to his heart.

Chapter 15

"BUT FOR DON PERCY..."

MEANWHILE Mr. Buffard had suffered a severe breakdown in health, and heart trouble developed. But as soon as he was able he was again busy, writing and speaking on the work that was so dear to him. He planned, too, for the future, and at a Council meeting which he attended in the summer of 1944, it was unanimously decided to ask Rev. E. Stuart Brown, who had signified his willingness to return to Spain when the Lord opened the way, to become Co-Director with him.

Advising supporters of his acceptance of the appointment, Mr. Buffard expressed his personal pleasure and satisfaction, adding that Mr. and Mrs. Brown both possessed the exceptional gift of understanding the Spanish point of view, and were persuaded that if the Church was to expand in Spain, it must be on a Spanish basis, with the missionary as adviser, not controller. The pursuit of that policy would ensure the continuity of the work.

Mr. Brown returned to the field in 1946, and in 1949 Mr. Buffard saw Spain for the last time. Accompanied by his wife, he spent three months in Valdepenas, where they arrived at ten o'clock at night, to find Mr. and Mrs. Brown and some sixty of the members of the church to meet them.

The deep affection in which they were held had not diminished during the long years of separation. Their Spanish friends flung themselves upon them in a tumultuous welcome, the women smothering Mrs. Buffard with kisses; the men treating her husband to Spanish hugs that left him almost breathless.

The welcome meeting was attended by about 150 people who came from far and near. Mr. Brown had trained a choir of thirty young people to sing, three speakers gave addresses of welcome, to which Mr. and Mrs. Buffard responded briefly, and, as every public meeting was used for evangelistic ends, an earnest Gospel address was given by a local barber.

Mr. and Mrs. Buffard in later years

After the meeting the kissing and hugging were renewed. " It did one's heart good," said Mr. Buffard, " to see the warmth of affection. How overjoyed were the older members to see us again ! It was also a joy to see the large number of young people, the majority of whom are converted. We praise God for what He has done during these years."

As no Bible school was possible, Mr. Brown had started holding short Bible courses of a week's duration for the training of young Spaniards. One such course was held soon after Mr. Buffard arrived, in which each day he took the devotional hour and one study class, which were greatly appreciated. But because of the heart condition he had to sit when teaching or preaching, and it was sadly evident to all that his days of active ministry on the field were numbered.

Determined on his return to render any service that still lay within his power, he continued for some years to edit the magazine and arrange deputation programmes. But his physical strength steadily declined, and eventually he was found to be suffering from Parkinson's disease. It was apparent to all that the sands of his life were running out.

In these circumstances the Council deemed it wise to name him Director Emeritus. Of his four sons, Frank, the second, had already felt called to Spain. He was fluent in the language and was appointed Co-Director with Rev. E. Stuart Brown. This was a great joy and comfort to Mr. Buffard.

In July 1957 Mr. Buffard entered hospital for an operation, and from the time of his return to his home on September 4th he was practically an invalid. It was surely a gracious dispensation of the Lord that in increasing measure he lost grip of things, and was thus spared the anguish of feeling that he could no longer serve the land whose name was engraved upon his heart.

He did, however, rally for a brief while in December, and was able to take an intelligent interest in the agenda of the forthcoming Council meeting. But it was that strange upsurge of vitality which in severe illness often heralds the end, and his powers were soon failing again.

On May 11th, 1958, Mr. Buffard had been put to bed as

usual, and, as Mrs. Buffard thought, had fallen asleep. Then, with a sense of shock, she realized that his spirit was with the Lord. For her, bereavement was tempered by the thought that for him it was " far better ".

Haywards Heath Evangelical Free Church was crowded for the funeral service, which was conducted by Rev. Geoffrey R. King, who in his tribute referred to " this man of God, with his quiet ways, his kindly disposition, his deep sincerity ".

All this was so true, and much more. He seemed to possess all the qualities that go to make a great missionary. He was pre-eminently a man of prayer, of unshakable faith and indomitable courage. He was courteous to those who differed from him and gracious to all. Although his eager spirit must often have chafed at the restrictions imposed by a frail body, he was never fretful. And the secret source of his lovable personality was the love of Christ filling his heart and overflowing in love to those to whom he was sent as the Lord's ambassador.

A deeply moving memorial service was held at Valdepenas on May 18th, many people travelling long distances in order to be present. For two hours they listened as speakers expressed thanksgiving to God for Don Percy's life and work. But most moving of all were the words of those who declared with emotion, " But for Don Percy, neither we, our families, nor our friends, would ever have known the Saviour."

Don Percy would have coveted no higher tribute than that embodied in this simple, but eloquent testimony.

EPILOGUE

THE work which Don Percy founded with such devotion and wisdom years ago is still being carried on to-day. When, in 1946, Mr. Brown returned to the field after a ten years' absence—during which all the chapels were closed and meetings could only be held clandestinely and at risk—he found twelve converts awaiting baptism, all converted through secret meetings or private conversation, a convincing proof of the strength and solidity of the work done before the shocks of the Civil War and the subsequent repression began. Three years later, when Don Percy himself went for a short time, he was gladdened to see the fine band of young people attending the meetings, many of them the children of grandchildren or his earliest converts.

The work was reviving after its long " winter sleep " of ten years. But leadership presented a great problem for nearly all the preachers, and all but one of the pre-war evangelists, had been imprisoned, some had been executed, while others had had their health seriously impaired by what they had suffered. Thus it was that in 1946 not one of the old workers was able to take part in reviving the work. True, the opportunities were very restricted and there was no liberty for public propaganda, nevertheless there were a number of struggling Churches and smaller groups of believers in different places that needed to be visited and encouraged by means of private meetings. At the same time Mr. Brown found here and there a few earnest young men who were beginning to preach in cottage meetings. They had had few educational advantages and their knowledge even of the Bible was slender. They needed some form of training, but to open a Bible School was out of the question, for even if the funds had been provided it would almost certainly have been closed by the authorities.

It was this situation that gave him the vision of holding short residential Bible Courses. The aim of these was to

give the young men a clearer vision of the Lord, a conception of the power of prayer, an idea of how to study His Word and to pass its message on in an effective form to others. Having learnt how to study, the more intelligent could continue with correspondence courses in their spare time. The property that Mr. Buffard had been led to purchase years previously was found to be excellently adapted for holding these courses in peace and quietness without attracting too much attention. The first was held in 1947, and soon they became the most characteristic feature of the work of the Mission. Many that attended never became preachers, but the experience left an indelible impression on their lives as it gave them a more adequate conception of what it means to be a Christian. In 1952 two courses were held, one for beginners and one for preachers, and as the years passed the standard of teaching given in the preachers' course could be raised to a much higher level. In 1953 the first course was held for girls, in which Mrs. Brown took the principle part, and soon young people of both sexes all over the region were looking forward to this annual spiritual treat which brought such blessings to themselves and infused new life into the Churches and groups of believers. By 1959 one hundred young people had attended at least once. Had all those attending remained in that part of Spain, it would soon have become the most evangelized part of the country, but many have left. Work in an agricultural area is hard and the wages low, and these factors, together with the general oppression suffered by protestants—always worse in smaller towns and villages—have produced a steady stream of migration to the industrial areas, particularly Barcelona and its adjacent towns, while sixteen of the congregation that welcomed Don Percy back in 1949 are established in far away Argentina. Thus the local Churches have been weakened by the migration quicker than they have been enriched by the Bible Courses, and all this puts a greater strain on the Mission to maintain the Gospel witness in that region; but, on the other hand, the seed in the Bible Courses is being scattered in other parts of Spain and even beyond.

In 1950, the year after Don Percy said "good-bye"

to Spain, his second son, Frank, arrived on the field, along with his wife and baby son. Trained at Spurgeon's College, as Mr. Brown had been, he soon showed himself apt for the work, adaptable to the Spaniards, and able to master their language, and as Don Percy's powers gradually failed, so his son increased in strength and effectiveness. Never allowed to remain in the country long without at least crossing the frontier, Mr. Frank Buffard has made an increasing contribution to the work, and his quiet, tactful gift of leadership is promoting just the kind of indigenous growth that is likely to stand the test of time.

If it were not for the migration, the Gospel witness would have been building up magnificently in that part of Spain to which the Lord led Don Percy in 1917. But perhaps one reason why the Lord has not allowed this to happen is that a strong increase locally would probably have provoked even fiercer repressive measures from the authorities in a part of the country where the priests have unchallenged power. So the workers of the Mission continue their labour undiscouraged, keeping the lamp of Gospel witness burning in a needy place, and if—to change the simile—much of the seed they sow is reaped by fellow-labourers in other places, they believe they have an important contribution to make to the evangelization of the thirty million Spaniards.

How difficult the task is can be seen from the following facts. Evangelicals in Spain may not:

(1) Worship God together except in a small number of tolerated Churches and a few places where cottage meetings are winked at;
(2) Identify their places of worship by any outward sign;
(3) Circulate the Scriptures or portions thereof;
(4) Distribute tracts;
(5) Have private schools to educate their children;
(6) Engage in teaching or any other profession;
(7) Contract legal matrimony without vexatious delays and added expenditure, and even then not always succeed;
(8) Engage in any medical missionary work, even where such is really needed;

(9) Conduct a public funeral service;

(10) Be sure that they will avoid unjust punishment.

BUT, strengthened by the Lord, they may:

(1) Pray in private and in small groups;

(2) Make the most of the churches and halls they are allowed to use;

(3) Have private Sunday Schools and Young People's Societies;

(4) Circulate the Scriptures and tracts clandestinely;

(5) Hold cottage meetings in certain places, sometimes at dead of night without any singing or in some isolated country spot far from their enemies;

(6) " Gossip the Gospel " among their acquaintances.

In spite of all the restrictions the work goes on. Though small, it has a purifying effect on the Roman Church itself, as where there is a Gospel witness the worst Romish corruptions tend to disappear. The work is not in vain. Generally speaking, there are more conversions in the Churches founded by Don Percy and his successors than in the Churches of the same size in England where there are ample liberties and greatly superior resources. Despite the fierce opposition of a worldly Church, jealous of its monopoly, the Gospel wins its way, for the Gospel is " the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth ".

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